Living the Orthodox Christian Life

An Introduction to Orthodoxy

Saint George Greek Orthodox Cathedral
Greenville, SC
2009

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Introduction
What is Christianity?

Many people see Christianity as one of the numerous philosophies and religions known from antiquity. Certainly Christianity is not a philosophy... The main difference between Christianity and philosophy is that the latter is human thinking, while Christianity is a revelation... by God Himself to man...

Christianity cannot be regarded as a religion... as religion presents itself today. God is usually visualized as dwelling in heaven and directing human history from there: He is extremely exacting, seeking satisfaction from man, who has fallen to earth in his sickness and weakness. There is a wall of separation between God and man. This has to be surmounted by man, and religion is a very effective help. Various religious rites are employed for this purpose.

According to another view, man feels powerless in the universe and needs a mighty God to help him in his weakness. In this view God does not create man, but man creates God. Again, religion is conceived as man's relationship to the Absolute God, that is to say, the "relationship of the `I' to the Absolute Thou". Yet again, many regard religion as a means whereby the people are deluded into transferring their hopes to the future life. In this way strong powers put pressure on the people by means of religion.

But Christianity is something higher than these interpretations and theories; it cannot be contained within the usual conception and definition of religion given in the "natural" religions. God is not the Absolute Thou, but a living Person Who is in organic communion with man. Moreover, Christianity does not simply transfer the problem to the future or await the delight of the kingdom of heaven after history and after the end of time. In Christianity the future is lived in the present and the kingdom of God begins in this life. According to the patristic interpretation, the kingdom of God is the grace of the Triune God, it is vision of the uncreated Light.

We Orthodox are not waiting for the end of history and the end of time, but through living in Christ we are running to meet the end of history and thus already living the life expected after the Second Coming. St. Symeon the New Theologian says that he who has seen the uncreated light and united with God is not awaiting the Second Coming of the Lord but living it. So the eternal embraces us at every moment of time. Therefore past, present and future are essentially lived in one unbroken unity. This is so-called condensed time.

Thus Orthodoxy cannot be characterized as the 'opium of the people', precisely because it does not postpone the problem. It offers life, transforms biological life, sanctifies and transforms societies. Where Orthodoxy is lived in the right way and in the Holy Spirit, it is a communion of God and men, of heavenly and earthly, of the living and the dead. In this communion all the problems which present themselves in our life are truly resolved.

Since the membership of the Church includes [spiritually] sick people and beginners in the spiritual life, it is to be expected that some of them understand Christianity as religion in the sense referred to above. Moreover, the spiritual life is a dynamic journey. It begins with baptism, which is purification of the `image', and continues through ascetic living aimed at attaining `likeness', which is to say communion with God. Anyway it must be made clear that even when we still speak of Christianity as a religion we must do it with certain necessary presuppositions.

The first is that Christianity is mainly a Church. 'Church' means 'Body of Christ'. There are many places in the New Testament where Christianity is called the Church. We shall only mention Christ's words: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (Matt.16:18) and the words of the Apostle Paul to the Colossians: "And he is the head of the body, the church" (1:18) and to his disciple Timothy: "...so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1Tim,.3,15). This means that Christ does not simply dwell in heaven and direct history and the lives of men from there, but He is united with us. He assumed human nature and deified it; thus in Christ deified human nature is at the right hand of the Father. So Christ is our life and we are 'members of Christ'.

The second presupposition is that the aim of the Christian is to attain the blessed state of deification. Deification is identical with `likeness', that is, to be like God. However, in order to reach the likeness, to attain the vision of God, and for this vision not to be a consuming fire but a life-giving light, purification must previously have taken place. This purification and healing is the Church's work. When the Christian participates in worship without undergoing life-giving purification - and moreover these acts of worship also aim towards man's purification - then he is not really living within the Church. Christianity without purification is utopia. So when we are being purified, especially when we are seeing to our healing, we can speak of religion. And this accords with the words of the Lord's brother James: *"If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world"* (Jas.1:26-27).

This abstinence gives us the right to claim that Christianity is neither philosophy nor 'natural' religion, but mainly healing. It is the healing of a person's passions so that he may attain communion and union with God.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan the Lord showed us several truths. As soon as the Samaritan saw the man who had fallen among thieves who had wounded him and left him half dead, he *"had compassion on him and went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him"* (Luk.10:33f). Christ treated the wounded man and brought him to the inn, to the Hospital which is the Church. Here Christ is presented as a physician who heals man's illnesses, and the Church as a Hospital.

It is very characteristic that in analyzing this parable St. John Chrysostom presents the truths which we have just emphasized. Man went down *"from the heavenly state to the state of the devil's deception, and he fell among thieves, that is, the devil and the hostile powers"*. The wounds which he sustained are the various sins. As David says, *"My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness" (Ps.38:5). For "every sin brings bruises and wounds"*. The Samaritan is Christ Himself, who came down from heaven to earth to heal wounded man. He used wine and oil for the wounds. That is to say, *"by mixing the Holy Spirit with his blood, he brought life to man"*. According to another interpretation, *"oil brings the comforting word, wine provides the astringent lotion, the instruction which brings concentration to the scattered mind"*. He set him upon his own animal: *"Taking flesh upon his own divine shoulders, he lifted it towards the Father in Heaven"*. Thereupon the good Samaritan, Christ, led the man *"into the wonderful and spacious inn, this universal Church"*. He gave him to the innkeeper, who is the Apostle Paul and *"through Paul to the high priests and teachers and ministers of each church"*, saying: *"Take care of the people of the Gentiles whom I have given to you in the Church. Since men are sick, wounded by sin, heal them, putting on them a stone plaster, that is, the prophetic sayings and the gospel teachings, making them whole through the admonitions and exhortations of the Old and New Testaments."* So according to St. John Chrysostom, Paul is the one who upholds the churches of God *"and heals all men through spiritual admonitions, distributing the bread of offering to each one..."* .

In St. John Chrysostom's interpretation of this parable it is clearly evident that the Church is a Hospital which heals those sick with sin, while the bishops and priests, like the Apostle Paul, are the healers of the people of God.

These truths also appear in many other places in the New Testament. The Lord said: *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick"* (Matt.9:12). Likewise Christ, as a physician of souls and bodies, was *"...healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people...and they brought to him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and he healed them"* (Matt.4:23f). The Apostle Paul is well aware that the conscience of men, especially of simple ones, is weak: *"When you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ"* (ICor.8:12). The Book of Revelation says that John the Evangelist saw a river of the water of life proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. *"On either side of the river was the tree of life...and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations"* (Rev.22:1f)....

So in the Church we are divided into the sick, those undergoing treatment, and those - saints - who have already been healed. "The Fathers do not categorize people as moral and immoral or good and bad on the basis of moral laws. This division is superficial. At depth humanity is differentiated into the sick in soul, those being healed and those healed. All who are not in a state of illumination are sick in soul...It is not only good will, good resolve, moral practice and devotion to the Orthodox Tradition which make an Orthodox, but also purification, illumination and deification." These stages of healing are the purpose of the Orthodox Way of Life.

By Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos of Nafpaktos, from *Orthodox Psychotherapy*

Orthodox Church History

What is the basis of Christian faith? How did the Church start and survive throughout the ages of political turmoil? How can we be sure that we are following the teachings of Christ and His Apostles.

Historical Jesus

How do you know that the life of Jesus is not just a story that the Church made up?

Hellenic Foundation

What role did the Greeks play in the establishment of Christianity?

Early Life in the Church

What was it like to be an early Christian?

Constantine the Great

Why did the Church give Constantine the title of Constantine the Great? Does a ruthless ruler of the empire deserve such a title?

Church of the Seven Councils

What is the significance of the Ecumenical Councils?

The Great Schism

What caused the split of the Church between East and West?

Attempts at Reunion

Will the Church ever be reunited?

Reformation

What role did the Orthodox Church play in the Reformation in the 16th Century?

Church in America

How was the Greek Orthodox Church brought to America?

We begin our exploration of the history of the Orthodox Church by asking the question, How do we know that the life of Jesus is not just a story that the Church made up? In this day and secular age we are taught to be skeptical especially of things promoted by large institutions. The answer to this question provides the basis of our Orthodox Christian faith.

Next, we examine the role that the Hellenic culture played in the establishment of Christianity. God took special steps to prepare the way to the Incarnation of His Son. The Greeks played a significant role in this preparation.

What was it like to be an early Christian? How could a small group of zealots proclaim the good news of the Gospel and change the world. After all, it was a well established pagan world controlled by the strong political and military system of the Roman Empire.

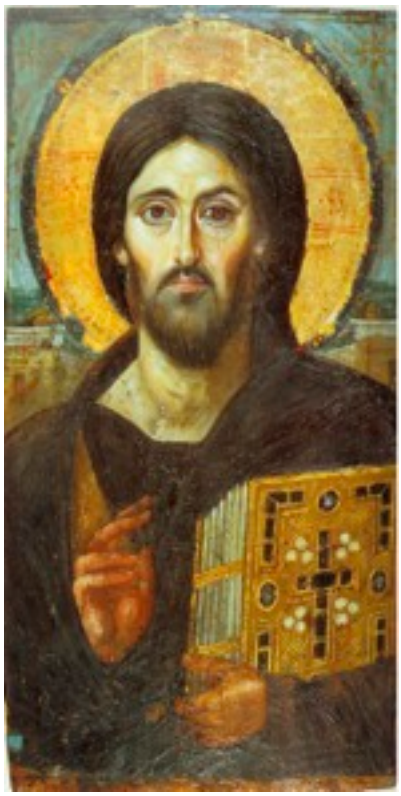
Life in the Church was significantly changed during the reign of Constantine. He earned the title of "Great" that only a few saints have been given by the Church. What did he do to deserve this title? After all, he was a ruthless ruler of a massive political empire.

The Orthodox Church is known as the Church of the Seven Councils. Why is this important? In understanding this we will find out how the Orthodox faith has been preserved throughout history amidst many political forces. It tells us why we claim to be the church with the truth of Christianity in its fullest.

We now observe many branches of Christianity. How did this split begin? How did the eastern and western churches split after being in union as one church for over a thousand years? What attempts have there been to reunify the church? Will it ever be brought back into one Church?

Finally we will briefly look at some of the factors that led to the Orthodox Church being brought here to the United states.

Jesus Christ Pantocrator



This is one of the oldest known icons of Christ. It is in the Monastery of Saint Catherine at the base of Mount Sinai in Egypt. It is thought to have been created in the fifth century. It is called the Pantocrator. This means the Almighty or All-powerful or the Ruler of All.

Christ here is Christ the Teacher: the gesture of Christ's right hand is not the gesture of blessing, but the orator's gesture.

Historical Jesus

How do we know that the life of Jesus is not just a story that the Church made up?

Tacitus, a Roman historian who wrote Annals in 115 CE, is considered one of the more accurate historians of the ancient world.

He wrote: "To dispel the rumor that the fire was started by Nero, Nero substituted as culprits, and treated with the most extreme punishments, some people, popularly known as Christians, whose disgraceful activities were notorious. The originator of that name, Christus, had been executed when Tiberius was Emperor, by order of the procurator Pontius Pilatus. But the deadly cult, though checked for a time, was now breaking out again not only in Judea, the birthplace of this evil, but even throughout Rome, where all the nasty and disgusting ideas from all over the world pour in and find a ready following." (Annals 15:44). This means there were a significant number of Christians in Rome in 64AD, only 30 years after the Crucifixion of Christ.

Flavius Josephus (37-98 CE), the most famous Jewish historian, was a Jewish zealot, not a follower of Jesus. He changed sides and became the Roman Emperor's adviser on Jewish affairs. His history book, *Antiquities of the Jews,* describes Palestine in the time of Jesus. Some historians think one part that talks about Jesus had been added to. With these extra bits taken away they think Josephus wrote:
"About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, for he was a performer of wonderful deeds, a teacher of such men as are happy to accept the truth. He won over many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. When Pilate, at the suggestion of the leading men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him at the first did not forsake him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct to this day." (*Antiquities*, Book 18, 63-64.)

He also said that the High Priest Ananias had:
"Convened the Sanhedrin (the highest Jewish religious court/governing body). He had brought before them the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ, who was called James, and some other men, whom he accused of having broken the law, and handed them over to be stoned." (*Antiquities*, Book 20, 200). Historians do not believe this second passage has been changed.

There is no question that historically Jesus existed.

New Testament Canon

Contrary to popular misconception, the New Testament canon was not summarily decided in large, bureaucratic Church council meetings, but rather developed very slowly over many centuries.

In the first three centuries of the Christian Church, there seems to have been no New Testament canon that was universally recognized.

The New Testament canon, as it is now, was first listed by Saint Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria in 367, in a letter written to his churches in Egypt (Festal Letter 39).

This canon gained wider and wider recognition until it was formally accepted at the Third Council of Carthage in 397.

How do we know that the Bible, which contains most of what we know about Jesus, has not been changed over the years?

Starting in about 40 AD, and continuing to about 90 AD, the eye-witnesses to the life of Jesus, including Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter and Jude, wrote the Gospels, letters and books that became the Bible's New Testament. These authors quote from 31 books of the Old Testament, and widely circulate their material so that by about 150 AD, early Christians were referring to the entire set of writings as the "New Covenant."

There exist full manuscripts of the New Testament as early as 350, which is about the same time as the Church officially compiled the New Testament in 367. There are papyri containing most of the New Testament from the third century. There is a fragment of John's Gospel from AD 139. There are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts, over 10,000 Latin manuscripts, and 9,300 other manuscripts including those in Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Georgian and so forth. There are over 36,000 citations of the New Testament in the writings of the early church fathers.

Biblical scholars say that our New Testament is 99.5% textually pure. In the entire text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt (about 400 words), and none affects any significant doctrine.

The authenticity of the New Testament is vastly better documented than any other document of the same time. There is no doubt about the authenticity of the New Testament.

The New Testament was produced under the guidance of the early church, which is the same as the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church used the same book to this day in the original Greek in which it was written. It has never been changed or translated. In our Liturgy the priest will usually read the Gospel in both Greek and an English translation. For the true meaning of the Gospel we rely on the early church fathers interpretations and the clarification handed down by the Ecumenical councils.

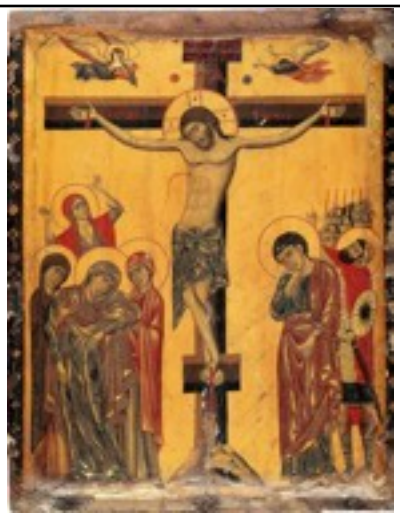
What do we Know about Jesus from these texts?

We know that He had a miraculous birth from a holy virgin woman.

We know that he taught us about the way to salvation.

We know that He performed many miracles including raising people from death.

We know that he came to us for our benefit, for our salvation and eternal life in heaven.



Icon of the Crucifixion with Mary on the left and John on the right.

Tomb stone like the one which would have been used to close Christ's tomb.

Church of the
Holy Sepulcher
in Jerusalem.
This is the site of the actual burial of Christ.

We know that He fulfilled over three hundred Old Testament prophecies.

We know that he was cruelly crucified and then resurrected.

After forty days of His resurrection, we know that He ascended into heaven with the promise to send the Holy Spirit.

On the day of Pentecost, ten days later, His Apostles were transformed when they received the Holy Spirit and began converting thousands and organizing the Church.

Central to the Gospel story is His death and resurrection along with His promise that we too will be resurrected. So, how do we know that He was truly resurrected? Are there any plausible conspiracy theories?

Maybe Jesus was not dead when taken from the Cross and escaped from the tomb.

The tomb of Jesus was continually guarded. It was closed with a 2,000 pound stone making it impossible for even a healthy man to open it from the inside. We know that a soldier would never take a body down unless the person was dead. If he did and the prisoner escaped the soldier would be subject to a penalty of death. We also know that when the soldier pierced Christ's body there was a flow of water and blood, which is a clear indication that there was a separation of clot and serum, which is strong medical evidence of death.

Could His body have been stolen from the tomb?

Maybe the disciples stole his body. But how could they even think of this when they were depressed and disillusioned and fled from the scene of the Crucifixion out of fear for their own lives. We saw that they needed something extraordinary to transform them into men with the force that Peter showed at Pentecost when thousands of people were converted.

The Apostles all set about to teach the Good News of the Gospel. They did so in what was a hostile world. In the end they all were martyred except for John. It is not reasonable to assume that they would undertake this mission in the face of their own death based on a lie.

How about the authorities. Could they have stolen the body? But if this were so, why wouldn't they have produced the body when trying to squash the rumor that He was resurrected.

Church of the Nativity In Bethlehem

Christ was born in a cave in Bethlehem. The cave site was 'identified' by St. Justin Martyr, a 2nd century Christian apologist.

The first church at the site was built by Helena, the mother of the Roman emperor Constantine, sometime around 326 AD. Later destroyed, the church was rebuilt in much its present form by the Emperor Justinian around 529 AD. The Church of the Nativity is thus one of the oldest Christian churches in existence.

Chapel at Cave where Christ was born

Could Christ's appearances have been hallucinations?

The disciples were very stable individuals. They were burly fishermen, tax collectors and skeptics like Thomas. They would not fit a psychological profile of one likely to have hallucinations. Further, they would all have had to be hallucinating. Jesus appeared to His disciples eleven times on different occasions over a period of six weeks. He could be touched, He ate fish, He held long conversations with them, teaching them many things about the Kingdom of Heaven.

Wishful thinking on the part of the disciples is highly unlikely even in light of their initial hopefulness and enthusiasm. But, they were not easily convinced as Christ had to scold them on their faith. In fact, they came into the appearances not wishfully hoping to see Christ, but disbelieving those who did. Saint Thomas is the best example. He demanded evidence, which Christ gave to him. Further, wishful thinking would not stand up in the threats of death and all the trials and tribulations that they later had to face.

The Apostles did not have doubts about Christ's Resurrection.

Reality

Jesus Christ was Resurrected to save us and show us the way to eternal life. He did dramatically arise into Heaven and then on Pentecost empowered the Apostles by the Holy Spirit that He told them He would send. They did act dramatically to convert thousands in a harsh Jewish and pagan world. They did not waiver in the face of their own deaths and persecutions. The Apostles did form the Church and gave it structure.

The Orthodox Church has continually existed for 2,000 years teaching the truths as taught by Him and His Apostles.

There are over a billion people today who know Jesus as the way to salvation and eternal life.

The Bottom Line: Our Faith

There is no doubt about:

- The historical existence of Christ
- His virgin birth
- His teaching
- His death by crucifixion
- His Resurrection
- The establishment of His Church by His Apostles

Orthodoxy holds these truths in the fullest.

The Creed

I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father, through whom all things were made.

For us and for our salvation, He came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and He suffered and was buried.

On the third day He rose according to the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets.

In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

I expect the resurrection of the dead.

And the life of the age to come. Amen.

Faith

Our Christian journey begins with FAITH. Faith involves the acceptance of the full truth of the story of the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ, who was both fully human and fully God, and His Crucifixion and Resurrection as told to us in the Gospels.

Christianity demands as a first step a total faith in God as the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Persian Wars

In the mid 6th century B.C. the Persians took over many of the Greek cities along the coast of Asia Minor and threatened to take over all of the Greek cities.

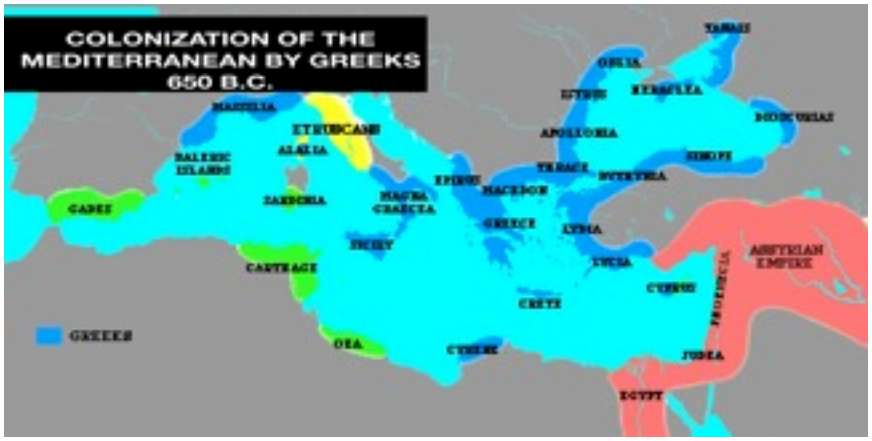
About 480BC was when King Leonides, the hero in the movie 300, delayed the Persians' assault by Xerxes at the battle of Thermopylae. Xerxes attacked Athens, but Themistocles evacuated the city by sea and defeated the Persian fleet at the battle of Salmis. It was a year later when the Greeks led by a Spartan named Pausanius defeated the Persian army at Plataea. The Athenians then chased the Persians out of the Aegean and captured Byzantium forming a strong alliance with City and Island states.. Athens became a commercial power at this time.

Hellenic Foundation

What role did the Greeks play in the establishment of Christianity?

At the time of Jesus, Greek was the preferred language of the civilized world. It was the common language of trade and intellectual writings.

It was in the 8th century BC that the influence of Greece began to be felt throughout the Mediterranean. This is when the Greek alphabet was created. They began to expand and to establish colonies. The Aegean coast of Asia Minor was first colonized. This was followed by Cyprus and the coasts of Thrace, the Sea of Marmara and the south coast of the Black Sea. Then they extended West to the west coasts of Illyria, Sicily and southern Italy. By the 6th century BC the Greeks had spread over a large geographical area. They organized themselves into independent communities. They thrived in commerce. It reached an economic hight in the 4th century BC where Ancient Greece was clearly the most advanced economy in the world.



Greek Alphabet

Greek was the first alphabet that used a separate symbol for each vowel and consonant. It is also the oldest alphabet in use today.

It started as a radical modification of the Phonecian alphabet and gave rise to the Gothic, Glagolitic, Cryillic, Coptic and Latin alphabet.

The Greek in common use during the time of Christ is called Koine (common) Greek.

When Jesus spoke to Pilate He most likely spoke in Greek. The language He probably most commonly used was Aramaic. This was likely the language that was used in the Jewish synagogues at that time.

The Pharisees most likely spoke both Aramaic and Greek. The Saducees used Greek in communication with roman authorities who used Greek among themselves.

Alexander the Great

The Most significant spread into the world where Christianity was to be born was the result of the conquests of Alexander the Great. In 334 BC he conquered all of Persia and went as far as what is now Afghanistan and Pakistan and on to Punjab. He died in 323 BC. His empire broke up soon after his death, but his conquests permanently changed the Greek world. There were thousands of Greeks who traveled with him or followed his conquests to settle in new Greek cities that he founded. One of the most important was Alexandria. Greek speaking kingdoms in Egypt, Syria, Persia and Bactria were established. This was the beginning of what is known by historians as the Hellenic age.

One of the features of the Greek society was the differing roles of men and women and the lack of distinction based on birth. The way of life of the Athenians was spread.

The Greek language was the official language in trade, administration and literature.

Greek - a common language even in Rome.

While Latin remained the main written language of the Roman Empire, Greek came to be the language spoken by the well-educated elite, as most of the literature studied by Romans was written in Greek. In the eastern half of the Roman Empire, which later became the Byzantine Empire, Latin was never able to replace Greek, and after the death of Justinian, Greek became the official language of the Byzantine government.

In Jewish catacomb inscriptions in Rome, most of the 534 names are Greek: 405 (76%). This confirms that most Roman Jews were culturally Greek, not Latins.

In the letter that Paul wrote to the Roman Christians he gives his regards to 18 people with a Greek name, 4 Latins and 2 Hebrews (Epistle to the Romans 16.5-16). This letter was also written in Greek.

The Roman populace overwhelmingly spoke Greek.

Where did Paul Journey?

Paul's first Journey was to Antioch, which was established after the conquest of Alexander the Great as a Greek city. This is where the followers of Christ were first called Christians. Paul went on to Cyprus which is still a Greek speaking nation, and then into what is now Turkey. His second journey Paul visited Antioch and then headed up through the middle of Asia Minor and then into Macedonia, which is now part of Modern Greece. He visited Neapolis, Phillipi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth. From there he went back to Aisa Minor to the city of Ehpesus and then back to Israel and Caesarea. His third journey started in Antioch and then through Asia Minor to Ephesus, over to Greece and Thessalonica then to Corinth and back to Thessalonica , Phillipi and back along the coast of Asia Minor. Returning to Caesarea. Finally Paul went to Rome.

The Roman world was one that was heavily influenced by the Hellenic culture and language.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

The title “Ecumenical Patriarch” dates from the sixth century and historically belongs to the Archbishop of Constantinople exclusively. As Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew occupies the First Throne of the Orthodox Christian Church worldwide, presiding in historical honor and fraternal spirit among all Orthodox Primates.

Bartholomew was born in the village of Aghios Theodoros (Άγιος Θεόδωρος in Greek, in Turkish Zeytinli köyü) on Imbros. He studied Theology as an undergraduate at the Patriarchal Theological school, Halki seminary. Bartholomew pursued graduate studies at the Pontifical Oriental Institute of Rome, the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey (Switzerland) and the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich, Germany. His doctoral research was on Canon Law.

In October 1991 he was elected as the 270th Archbishop of the Orthodox Church founded by Saint Andrew.

Saint Andrew
Apostolic Succession

Saint Andrew is the first called of the Apostles. He is also the Apostle that we trace our Apostolic tradition back to. He is also the brother of Peter. Historian Eusebius tells us that Andrew preached in Asia Minor and along the Black Sea as far as Volga and Kiev. He is, therefore, also the patron saint of Romania and Russia. In 38 AD he founded the See at Byzantium, which later became the Patriarchate of Constantinople. He traveled through Greece and was martyred in Patras.

Today, our Ecumenical Patriarch is Bartholomew. He is the 270th Patriarch . Our Bishop Metropolitan Alexios in Atlanta can trace his ordination directly back to Saint Andrew.

Apostolic succession is a major point for Orthodoxy. The first Christians had no doubts about how to determine which was the true Church and which doctrines were the true teachings of Christ. The test was simple: Just trace the apostolic succession of the claimants.

Apostolic succession is the line of bishops stretching back to the apostles. All over the world, all Orthodox bishops are part of a lineage that goes back to the time of the apostles, something that is impossible in Protestant denominations.

The role of apostolic succession in preserving true doctrine is illustrated in the Bible. To make sure that the apostles’ teachings would be passed down after the deaths of the apostles, Paul told Timothy, "What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). In this passage he refers to the first three generations of apostolic succession - his own generation, Timothy’s generation, and the generation Timothy will teach.

In the Epistle of St. Clement to the Church at Corinth, written around 96 AD, Clement defends the authority and prerogatives of a group of "elders" or "bishops" in the Corinthian Church which had, apparently, been deposed and replaced by the congregation on its own initiative. In this context, Clement explicitly states that the apostles both appointed bishops as successors and had directed that these bishops should in turn appoint their own successors; given this, such leaders of the Church were not to be removed without cause and not in this way.

Saint George

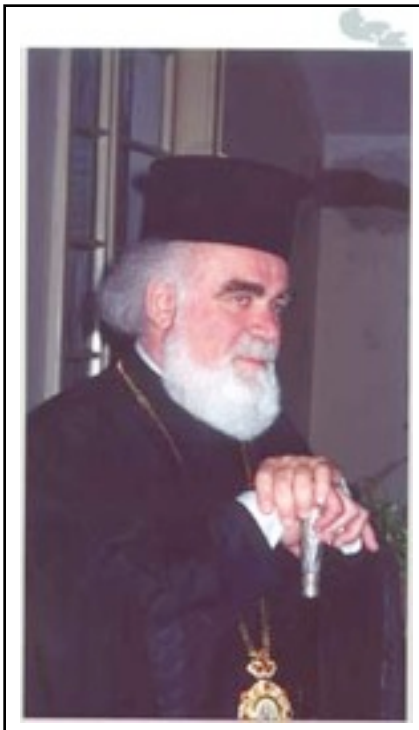
The patron Saint of our Cathedral is Saint George. He was a martyr of the Church who give his life for his faith in the early part of the fourth century. He was a roman soldier. The emperor at that time required that everyone pay tribute to him and his gods. George refused and when asked why, he said he was a Christian and that these were false gods that he could not honor. He was then tortured with the purpose of trying to get him to change his mind and to make the simple sacrifices to the gods of the emperor. When this did not work he was then beheaded. By his faith many more of his soldier comrades became Christians.

Early Life in the Church

What was it like to be an early Christian?

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles and they were empowered to spread the Word to all nations. Now, to do this was a dangerous task. The Jewish Priests had just killed God himself. In the early days after the feast of Pentecost the Jews were showing a prejudice against the Christians by not providing the widows with their normal food distribution. The Christians then appointed deacons to help these widows and others in need of help. Saint Stephen was outstanding in fulfilling these duties and some Jews began to accuse Stephen of speaking blasphemy and stirring up many people. He was brought to the council and accused of saying "blasphemous words against Moses and God." Stephen's response angered them so much that they threw him out of the city and began to stone him. They stoned him until he was dead. So, from the earliest days of the Church the risks of being a Christian, a believer in the story told in the Gospel, brought with it the risk of unfair treatment and even death. But, there was a reason for this. Faithful like Stephen did not waiver from their faith, and as others saw this, the truth of the message they were speaking spread. People saw the incredible faith they had in what they were teaching. They saw that they were willing to stand as a true witness to Christ even in the face of death all the while giving thanks to God. They knew that there was more to the true life than the bodily life here on earth.

As we read the letters of Paul we also see that the early Christians were a very close community, owning things in common, and living a very self-controlled life. They worshiped together regularly in the secret of their homes and later even in catacombs over the tombs of their martyrs. They were very devout when compared to our modern day life as a Christian. They were about changing the very fabric of the existing culture and the norms of the existing religious practices of the time.



Metropolitan Alexios

On December 20th, 2002, Holy Diocese became the Holy Metropolis of Atlanta and His Grace, Bishop Alexios of Atlanta became His Eminence, Metropolitan Alexios of Atanta.

Metropolitan Alexios was born in Anthimos Panagiotopoulos, on Christmas day, Dec. 25, 1943, in Patras, Greece, to Spyridon and Angeliki Panagiotopoulos. He is the oldest of five brothers and two sisters.

He graduated from the University of Athens School of Theology in 1973, and received his Doctor of Ministry degree in 1977 from the Boston University School of Theology.

He was enthroned as Bishop of Atlanta on May 22, 1999.

How was the Early Church Organized?

As Christianity spread the Apostles had to come up with a way to administer the Churches. The natural organization was to follow the political division then in place as part of the Roman government. This was by cities. They appointed bishops in each city to be the head of the Church. Then the bishops would have presbyters, or priests as we call them today, to help them. We know that from the earliest days of the Church that the Bishop had the ultimate authority in administrative matters. We have already mentioned deacons who were also ordained to help in the administration of Church affairs.

There were also strict qualifications of those who were to be ordained as ministers of the church. They had to be temperate, have only one wife, be sensible, dignified in their behavior, hospitable, able to teach, not heavy drinkers, gentle, not greedy, not quarrelsome, able to run his own household well and well thought of by outsiders. He was not to be quick tempered, self-controlled, seen as God's steward and have a firm hold on God's word. They were instructed to watch over the flock as good shepherds acting as caretakers of souls being impartial to teach the and show all the way of sound doctrine.

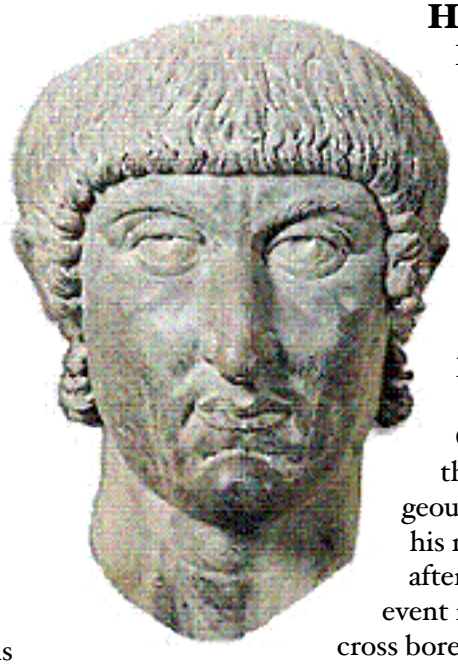
The Church was seen as a local community. A community of believers who had to work together and learn to love one anther. They were close knit groups who regularly came together to participate in the eucharist. Their purpose was worship and to support each other in living in the example of Christ. It was a local church, yet it was always the fulness of the Church. Each gathering was a gathering of the whole Church.

The Church is universal with one Episcopate. There are many churches, but only one Church. It is never divided. There May be many bishops, but again there is only one episcopate.

In the Orthodox Church today there are bishops, presbyters, deacons and the lay persons of the congregation. The organization is the same as it was established by the Apostles.

Constantine the Great

Why did the Church give Constantine the title of "Great"? Does a ruthless ruler of the empire deserve such a title?



The emperor Constantine has been called the most important emperor of Late Antiquity. His powerful personality laid the foundations of post-classical European civilization; his reign was eventful and highly dramatic. His victory at the Milvian Bridge counts among the most decisive moments in world history, while his legalization and support of Christianity and his foundation of a 'New Rome' at Byzantium rank among the most momentous decisions ever made by a European ruler.

Rise to Power

Constantine, was born at Naissus in the province of Moesia Superior, the modern Nish in Serbia, on 27 February, 272. His father was a general named Constantius, his mother a woman of humble background named Helena (later St. Helena). Upon the retirement of Dilcletian and Maximian on 1 May 305 Constantius succeeded to the rank of Augustus. When Constantius died, on 25 July 306, Constantine was at his side. The soldiers at once proclaimed him Augustus. For the next 18 years, he fought a series of battles and wars that left him first as emperor of the west, and then as supreme ruler of the Roman Empire.

At the same time the Senate and the Praetorian Guard in Rome allied themselves with Maxentius, the son of Maximian proclaimed him emperor. Open hostilities between the two rivals broke out in 312, and Constantine won a decisive victory in the famous Battle of the Milvian Bridge, making Constantine the sole ruler of the western half of the empire.

His Conversion

During the night before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, Constantine was commanded in a dream to place the sign of Christ on the shields of his soldiers. Lactantius and Eusebius record that he saw a brilliant light, in which he saw the cross or the monogram of Christ. Strengthened by this he advanced courageously to battle and defeated his rival. When the emperor afterwards reflected on the event it was clear to him that the cross bore the inscription: "In this sign wilt thou conquer". A monogram combining the first letters, X and P, of the name of Christ (CHRISTOS), a form that cannot beproved to have been used by Christians before, was made one of the tokens of the standard and placed upon the Labarum . In addition, this ensign was placed in the hand of a statue of the emperor at Rome, the pedestal of which bore the inscription: "By the aid of this salutary token of strength I have freed my city from the yoke of tyranny and restored to the Roman Senate and People the ancient splendor and glory."

Was this conversion a matter of political expediency rather than a religious conviction? Constantine attributed his victory to the power of "the God of the Christians" and committed himself to the Christian faith from that day on. When examined carefully there is no basis to assume this was a political act. The Christians formed only a small portion of the population, being a fifth part in the West and the half of the population in a large section of the East. Constantine's decision depended less on political or social conditions than on a personal act. Even though Constantine did not receive baptism until shortly before his death, it would be a mistake to interpret this as a lack of sincerity or commitment. In the fourth and fifth centuries Christians often delayed their baptisms until late in life.

Edict of Toleration

In the following year, February 313, Constantine and Licinius (Emperor of the East) met at Milan. On this occasion the two emperors formulated a common religious policy. Several months later Licinius issued an edict, which is commonly known as the Edict of Milan or Toleration of Faith. This declared that Christians and all others have freedom in the exercise of religion. Everyone might follow that religion which he considered the best. They hoped that "the deity enthroned in heaven" would grant favor and protection to the emperors and their subjects.

Constantine showed equal favor to both religions. He watched over the heathen worship and protected its rights. The one thing he did was to suppress divination and magic. Without realizing the full import of his actions, Constantine granted the Church one privilege after another. As early as 313 the Church obtained immunity for its clergy, including freedom from taxation and compulsory service, and from obligatory state offices. The Church further obtained the right to inherit property, and Constantine moreover placed Sunday under the protection of the State.

Constantine did much for children, slaves, and women, those weaker members of society whom the old Roman law had treated harshly. But, in this he only continued what earlier emperors had begun before him.

Constantine was the first to prohibit the abduction of girls. In harmony with the views of the Church, Constantine rendered divorce more difficult.

Constantine was generous in almsgiving, and adorned the Christian churches magnificently. There is no doubt that he was endowed with a strong religious sense, was sincerely pious, and delighted to be represented in an attitude of prayer, with his eyes raised to heaven. In his palace he had a chapel where he read the Bible and prayed. "Every day", Eusebius tells us, "at a fixed hour he shut himself up in the most secluded part of the palace, as if to assist at the Sacred Mysteries, and there commune with God alone ardently beseeching Him, on bended knees, for his necessities". He obeyed as strictly as possible the precepts of Christianity, observing especially the virtue of chastity, which his parents had impressed upon him; he respected celibacy, freed it from legal disadvantages, sought to elevate morality, and punished with great severity the offenses against morals, which the pagan worship encouraged. He brought up his children as Christians. Thus his life became more and more Christian.

He avoided any direct interference with dogma, and only sought to carry out what the synods decided. When he appeared at an ecumenical council, it was not so much to influence the deliberation and the decision as to show his strong interest and to impress the heathen. He banished bishops only to avoid strife and discord, that is, for reasons of state.

Reunification of Empire

The ultimate goal pursued by both Constantine and Licinius was sole power. The agreement of 313 had been born out of necessity, not of mutual good will. Hostilities erupted in 316. In the course of this first war between the two emperors two battles were fought. Neither side won a clear victory. A settlement left Licinius in his position as Augustus, but required him to cede to Constantine all of his European provinces other than Thrace. War erupted again in 324. Constantine defeated Licinius twice, first at Adrianople in Thrace, and then at Chrysopolis on the Bosporus. Constantine was now the sole and undisputed master of the Roman world.

First Ecumenical Council
The Arian Controversy, the Council of Nicaea

Early in the fourth century a dispute erupted within the Christian church regarding the nature of the Godhead, more specifically the exact relationship of the Son to the Father. Arius, a priest in Alexandria, taught that there was a time when Christ did not exist, i.e. that he was not co-eternal with the Father, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were three separate and distinct hypostaseis, and that the Son was subordinate to the Father, was in fact a "creature." These teachings were condemned and Arius excommunicated in 318 by a council convened by Alexander, the Bishop of Alexandria. But, that did not by any means close the matter. Ossius (or Hosius) of Cordova, Constantine's trusted spiritual advisor, failed on his mission to bring about a reconciliation.

Constantine then summoned what has become known as the First Ecumenical Council of the

church. The opening session was held on 20 May 325 in the great hall of the palace at Nicaea, Constantine himself presiding and giving the opening speech. The council formulated a creed, which, although it was revised at the Council of Constantinople in 381-82, has become known as the Nicene Creed. It affirms the Homoousion, i.e. the doctrine of consubstantiality. A major role at the council was played by Athanasius, Bishop Alexander's deacon, secretary, and, ultimately, successor. Arius was condemned.

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

In 326-28, Helen undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In the course of her journey Helen impressed Eusebius of Caesarea and others by her piety, humility, and charity. She played a role in the building of the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem and the Church of the Eleona on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives; but the Church of the Holy Sepulcher seems to have been an undertaking of Constantine alone. Helen also is the one who recovered the True Cross.

The New Rome

During the First Tetrarchy Trier, Milan, Thessalonike, and Nicomedia had served as imperial residences, and the importance of Rome as a center of government had thus been considerably reduced. Constantine went far beyond this when he refounded the ancient Greek city of Byzantium as Constantinople and made it the capital of the empire. His decision to establish a new capital in the East ranks in its far-reaching consequences with his decision to adopt Christianity. The new capital enjoyed a most favorable location which afforded easy access to both the Balkan provinces and the eastern frontier, controlled traffic through the Bosporus, and met all conditions for favorable economic development.

On 8 November 324, less than two months after his victory over Licinius at Chrysopolis, Constantine formally laid out the boundaries of his new city, roughly quadrupling its territory. By 328 the new walls were completed, and on 11 May 330 the new city was formally dedicated. The New Rome, both in its physical features and in its institutions, resembled the Old Rome. It was built on seven hills, it had a senate, and its people received subsidized grain. Constantine without question began the construction of two major churches in Constantinople, Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) and Hagia Eirene (Holy Peace); the foundation of a third, the Church of the Holy Apostles, may be attributed to him with a measure of certainty. Unlike the Old Rome, which was filled with pagan monuments and institutions, the New Rome was essentially a Christian capital (and eventually the see of a patriarch).

Final Years , Death, and Burial

In the years 325-337 Constantine continued his support of the church even more vigorously than before, both by generous gifts of money and by specific legislation. Among his numerous church foundations the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem and the Golden Octagon in Antioch deserve to be singled out. At the same time, he was more inclined to suppress paganism; we know of some specific pagan temples, which were torn down upon his orders, while in other cases temple treasures were confiscated and the proceeds fed into the imperial treasury.

Shortly after Easter (April 3, 337) Constantine began to feel ill. He traveled to Drepanum, now named Helenopolis in honor of his mother, where he prayed at the tomb of his mother's favorite saint, the martyr Lucian. From there he proceeded to the suburbs of Nicomedia, and there he was baptized, as both Eusebius and Jerome report.

A few weeks later, on the day of Pentecost, May 22, Constantine died at Nicomedia, still wearing the white robes of a Christian neophyte. His body was escorted to Constantinople and lay in state in the imperial palace. His sarcophagus was then placed in the Church of the Holy Apostles, as he himself had

directed; it was surrounded by the memorial steles of the Twelve Apostles, making him symbolically the thirteenth Apostle.

In the Orthodox Church Constantine is regarded a saint; he shares a feast day, May 21, with his mother Helen, and additionally has a feast day of his own, September 3.

The Verdict

So does he deserve the title of Great? He liberated the Christians from persecution and gave the empire a Christian set of values. He moved the capital of the empire to a more defensible location, which quickly became the center of Christianity and the wealthiest city in the world. He called the First Ecumenical Council of the Church establishing the pattern by which the Church formally dealt with deviations from the teachings of the Apostles. The first council formulated the creed, which we still use to this day. By treating the Church clerics with the status of imperial administrators, a union between Church and state was established that was to last throughout the Byzantine Empire. He also established the weekly cycle with Sunday designated for the worship of Jesus. In addition to his conversion to Christianity he was a great ruler uniting the Roman Empire and looking after the welfare of all the peoples of the empire.

Seven Ecumenical Councils

I. Nicea I 325
Formulated the First Part of the Creed, defining the divinity of the Son of God.

II. Constantinople I 381
Formulated the Second Part of the Creed, defining the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

III. Ephesus 431
Defined Christ as the Incarnate Word of God and Mary as Theotokos.

IV. Chalcedon 451
Defined Christ as Perfect God and Perfect Man in One Person.

V. Constantinople II 553
Reconfirmed the Doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ.

VI. Constantinople III 680
Affirmed the True Humanity of Jesus by insisting upon the reality of His human will and action.

VII. Nicea II 787
Affirmed the propriety of icons as genuine expressions of the Christian Faith.

The Church of the Seven Councils

What is the significance of the Ecumenical Councils?

Principle of Conciliarity

The early Church did not have a hierarchal decision making process like the western Church has today. Decisions were made based on the the way the Apostles first made decisions regarding the dogma of the Church. It was a process called conciliarity. The idea of conciliarity is the supreme authority lies in the action of a council. Originally it was a council of the Apostles. This later became the Ecumenical Council of all bishops of the church.

Conciliarity means that the supreme authority in the Church lies in the Ecumenical Council.

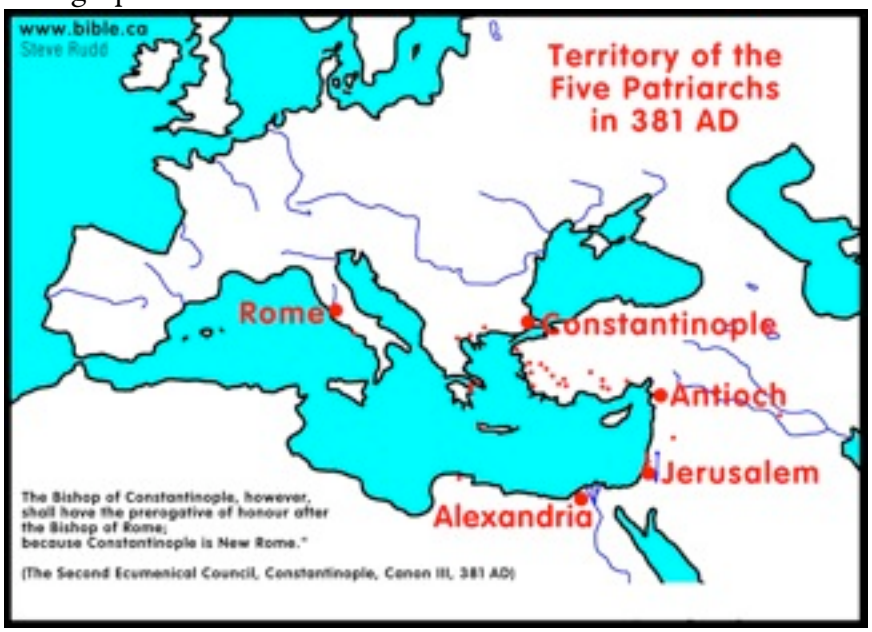
The Apostles showed us how to make a decision in the church. The first church council in history is often referred to as the Council of Jerusalem. It is described in Acts 15. It was called to resolve a disagreement within the early Church between those who desired that all should observe the traditional rules of Judaism and those represented by Paul, who did not believe that there was such a necessity. The central issue was circumcision of the Gentiles. There was an intense argument that occurred in Antioch and it was decided to go to Jerusalem and discuss it with the council of Apostles. Here it was discussed. All listened with an ear of discernment. For they were all of the Holy Spirit. Finally, James who was serving as the head of the council summarized the discussion and gave the final decision. We see here in operation a process that is sometimes referred to today as consensus decision making. It is rational, yet beyond rational and is a decision made collectively by holy persons through whom the Holy Spirit is actively working. It is this method that the process of the Ecumenical councils are based as well as all other synodal actions in the Church.

Patriarch comes from the Greek "patriarches," which means the father of a race or clan. Bishops of special dignity were called patriarchs. All such titles became technical terms, official titles, only gradually. At first they were used loosely as names of honor without any strict connotation. Gradually the word becomes an official title, used henceforth only as signifying a definite rank in the hierarchy, that of the chief bishops who ruled over metropolitans as metropolitans over their suffragan bishops.

Patriarchate (Greek patriarcheia) is the derived word meaning a patriarch's office, see, reign, or, most often, the territory he governs. It corresponds to episcopacy, episcopate, and diocese in relation to a bishop.

Patriarchates

At the time of the First Ecumenical Council there were five Patriarchates. Originally where were three. One in Rome the capital city, one in the major cities of Antioch and Alexandria. Then the First Ecumenical Council acknowledged Jerusalem as a patriarchate. Then by the Second Ecumenical Council, after Constantinople had become the functional capital of the Roman Empire, the Bishop of Constantinople was given the title as patriarch and considered to be first in honor among the others except for Rome which was to be first in honor among equals.



The map above shows the location of these important centers of the church. For a decision in council to be considered "ecumenical" the process had to include representatives from each of these patriarchates. Throughout the period of the Seven Ecumenical Councils these were the major centers of the Church.

Councils Preceding the First Ecumenical Council

We have already discussed the important Council of Jerusalem where the process of decision making and place of final authority in the resolution of differences was established.

In Scripture we are told of a later convention which took place *"When all of the elders were present."* (Acts 21:18) There exists a set of canons called the Canons of the Apostles, which may of come from this gathering. These were affirmed as Church canons later in the 6th and 7th council. It is believed that this set of canons is dated between 56 - 58 AD.

Arius (250-336)

Most believe that he came from Lybia and was a student in Antioch. He returned to Alexandria after his schooling and was ordained. He was known to be a man of good moral behavior and with an ascetic character. He was distinguished in his appearance, very intelligent and persuasive in his teaching.

After the rejection of his teaching at Nicea, his beliefs became associated with political forces and he was later readmitted to the church by the Emperor, but before this order could take effect he died a horrible death. Their was a violent relaxation of the bowels: he therefore enquired whether there was a convenient place near, and being directed to the back of Constantine's Forum, he hastened there. Soon after a faintness came over him, and together with the evacuations his bowels protruded, followed by a copious hemorrhage, and the descent of the smaller intestines: moreover portions of his spleen and liver were brought off in the effusion of blood, so that he almost immediately died. Some believe this was the work of the Holy Spirit.

First Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 325

Nicaea, today Iznik, is located on the shore of a lake close to the Asian coast of the Marmara Sea, in the historical region called Bithynia.
Right: Ayasofya (St. Sophia) Cathedral was the seat of the first Ecumenical Council of 325 A .D

FIRST FOUR ECUMENICAL COUNCILS (325, 380, 431, 450 C.E.)

The first council was important because it dealt with a deviation from the teachings of the early Church due to the preaching of Arius, who was a priest at the church of Baucalis in Egypt. He was in open conflict with the Bishop of Alexandria, Alexander. The issue was the divinity of Christ. Arius taught that if Jesus was born then there was a time when He did not exist. If He became God, then there was a time when He was not. Therefore, He cannot be God. Jesus then was inferior to the father, a creature. What was at stake here was that if Christ is less than God, then it renders it impossible for our human deification (to become like God). It is only if Christ is both man and God that we can hope to be united with God. It is only God who can open the way of union and our salvation. The council declared this teaching to be a heresy decreeing that Christ is God. He is of the same essence (Homoousios) with God the Father.

This first Council made the doctrine of the Holy Trinity very precise to avoid future debates on this issue. The result was what is known as the Nicean Creed (it was added to in the Second Council as we will see in a moment). The council also set a uniform date for the celebration of Pascha (Easter).

Ephesus

Ephesus was an ancient city founded in the 10th century BC by the prince of Athens named Androklos. Its main temple housed the goddess of Artemis and known as the largest building of the Ancient world.

It was an important city of Christianity. Paul used it for a base, and it was where John the Evangelist was bishop.

There was a very large church built in the 6th century in honor of Saint John. There were many pilgrims that came to venerate his relics so Justinian built a large basilica over his tomb. where his relics were kept.

Tomb of St. John

One can still see the ruins of the church where the Third Ecumenical Council was held.

The Council involved what we today know as some of the most important Holy Fathers of the Church. Saint Athanasius the Great was one of the prime defenders against Arianism. He later became Bishop of Alexandria and faced over sixteen years in exile for staying true to his Orthodox beliefs.

Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381

This council was called by emperors Gratian and Theodosius I. This council was called to continue the work of the first council to expand the Nicean Creed to include teachings about the Holy Spirit. They also condemned the teaching of Macedius, who declared the Son created the Holy Spirit. Macedonius taught that the Holy Spirit was not a person (hypostasis), but simply a power of God. Therefore, the Holy Spirit was inferior to the Father and the Son. In condemning his teaching the council further clarified the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The council declared that there was one God in three persons (hypostases): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

With this work the Creed, which is recited today, was completed. This Creed was later affirmed in later councils.

Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431

This council was held under emperor Theodosius II at the request of Nestorius, whose teachings had been condemned by Celestine, the Patriarch of Rome. Nestorius believed that the Virgin Mary gave birth to a man, Jesus Christ, not God the "Logos". Therefore, he said that the Logos only dwelled in Christ, as in a Temple. Christ was, therefore, only the bearer of God. Then the Virgin Mary should be called "Christokos", Mother of Christ" and not "Theotokos" Mother of God." He over emphasized the human nature of Christ at the expense of His divine nature. The council affirmed that our Lord Jesus Christ is one person and not two separate persons: the man, Jesus and the Son of God, Logos. They decreed that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Logos), is complete God and complete man, with a rational soul and body. The Virgin Mary is "Theotokos" because she gave birth not to man, but to God who became man. This union of the two natures took place in such a way that did not disturb the other.

This council affirmed the creed of the First and Second Councils without any changes.

Emperor Marcian 396-457

His rule marked a recovery of the eastern part of the empire, but left the west without help against the barbarians, which included the Vandal sack of Rome (455).

He is noted to have stood up to Atilla the Hun, “I have iron for Attila, but no gold.” Attila died soon after Marcian’s decision and Attila the Hun’s empire disintegrated, ending the threat from the Huns.

Marcian formed alliances with many peoples prevously under Hunnic domination, especially the Ostrogoths. He permitted those peoples to settle as federates in Pannonia, Thrace and Illyricum. Marcian’s policy resulted in saving the imperial treasury enormous sums of money.

In the East his reign was an era of peace and prosperity.

Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451

The fourth council was called under the emperor Marcian. Its task was to defend Orthodoxy against the heresy of Eutyches and the Monophysites. To counter the extreme of the Nestorian heresy, there were some who now emphasized the unity of Christ with the Divinity. The Monphysites saw Christ as one but where the human nature was completely absorbed by the divine. This resulted in Christ with one personality and only one nature.

The main proponent of this heresy was Eutyches. He proclaimed "After the incarnation of God the Word I worship one nature, the nature of God Who took on flesh and became man"; "I confess that our Lord consists of two natures before [their] union, and after [their] union I confess one nature." He boldly proclaimed, "He Who was born of the Virgin Mary is perfect God and perfect man, but does not have flesh which is consubstantial with ours."

Eutyches managed to convince the Emperor Theodosius of his view and convinced him to call a council to affirm this view. Such council was called, but it is not known as an ecumenical council, but as the “Robbers” council. When Theodoius died Marcian, who was deeply committed to Orthodoxy, took his place. Leo the Great, the Pope of Rome, called for a new council to deal with this controversy. This council was attended by over 600 fathers, more than any other. It proclaimed:

“Following the holy fathers, we teach with one voice that the Son [of God] and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same [Person], that He is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, true God and true man, of a reasonable soul and [human] body consisting, consubstantial with the Father as touching His Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching His manhood; having become like us in all things save sin only; begotten of His Father before the ages according to His Godhead; but in these last days, for us men and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to His manhood. This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably [united], and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets of old have spoken concerning Him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ has taught us, and as the Creed of the fathers has delivered unto us.”

Fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 553

This council was called by the Emperor Justinian The Great. It was held in the most beautiful church ever built, the Hagia Sophia. It was called to finally end the Nestorian and Monophysite controversies which still raged. It confirmed the previous four Councils.

Emperor Justinian 482-565

Justinian was born a Latin speaking peasant in a small village. He was known as the "Emperor who never sleeps." He seems to have been amenable and easy to approach. He surrounded himself with men and women of extraordinary talent, selected not because of aristocratic origin, but based on merit.

One of the most spectacular features of Justinian's reign was the recovery of large stretches of land around the Western Mediterranean basin, which had slipped out of imperial control in the 5th century. Justinian considered it his divine duty to restore the Roman Empire to it ancient boundaries.

He made the Nicaen-Constantinopolitan Creed the sole symbol of the Church and accorded legal force to the canons of the four ecumenical councils. Justinian also rebuilt Hagia Sophia. The new Hagia Sophia, with its numerous chapels and shrines, large guilded dome, and mosaics, became the center and most visible monument of Eastern Orthodoxy in Constantinople.

Sixth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 680

This council dealt with the monothelite controversy. The Patriarch of Constantinople, Sergius, taught that although Christ had two natures (divine and human), He nevertheless acted as God only. In other words, His divine nature made all the decisions and His human nature only carried and acted them out. Hence the name: "Monothelitism" ("mono" one and "thelesis" will)

It declared:

Christ had two natures with two activities: as God working miracles, rising from the dead and ascending into heaven; as Man, performing the ordinary acts of daily life. Each nature exercises its own free will. Christ's divine nature had a specific task to perform and so did His human nature. Each nature performed those tasks set forth without being confused, subjected to any change or working against each other. The two distinct natures and activities related to them were mystically united in the one Divine Person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So what were these council sessions like? In this case, the Emperor presided over this council surrounded by high court officials. On his right sat the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Antioch and next to them the representative of the Patriarch of Alexandria. On the Emperor's left were seated the representatives of the Pope. In the midst of the assembly were placed the Holy Gospels. The Emperor was not able to be present during the 11th to 17th sessions, but returned and presided at the final gathering. The greater part of the eighteen sessions was devoted to an examination of the Scriptural and patristic passages bearing on the question of one or two wills, one or two operations, in Christ. George, Patriarch of Constantinople, was in agreement with the evidence of the Orthodox teaching concerning the two wills and two operations in Christ, but Macarius of Antioch, resisted to the end. In the 8th session, on 7 March 681, the council adopted the teaching of Pope Agatho in condemnation of Monothelitism.

Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 787

The seventh council was convened under Empress Irene. It was about the use of icons in the Church. In 726, in disregard of the protests of Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, Emperor Leo III issued his first edict against the veneration of images, and their exhibition in public places. This prohibition of a custom seems to have been inspired by a genuine desire to improve public morality, and received the support of the official aristocracy and a section of the clergy. But, a majority of the theologians and all the monks opposed these measures with uncompromising hostility, and in the western parts of the empire the people refused to obey the edict. A revolt, which broke out in Greece, mainly on religious grounds, was crushed by the imperial fleet in 727. In 730, Patriarch Germanos I of Constantinople resigned rather than subscribe to an iconoclast decree. Leo had him replaced by Anastasios who willingly sided with the emperor on the question of icons. In the Italian Peninsula, the defiant attitude of Popes Gregory II and Gregory III on behalf of image-veneration led to a fierce quarrel with the emperor. The former summoned councils in Rome to anathematize and excommunicate the iconoclasts (730, 732); Leo retaliated by transferring

Saint John of Damascus

(c. 676 – December 5, 749) He was a Syrian monk and presbyter. He was born and raised in Damascus under Muslim rule, and died (in all probability) at the Monastery of Mar Saba, southeast of Jerusalem. He was a person of wide ranging knowledge whose fields of interest and contribution included Law, Theology, Philosophy and Music. He was the Chief Administrator to the ruler of Damascus, wrote works expounding the Christian faith, and wrote hymns, which are still in everyday use in Eastern Orthodox churches throughout the world.

John of Damascus initiated his defense against the emperor in three "Apologetic Treatises against those Decrying the Holy Images." Not only did he attack the emperor, but the use of a simpler literary style brought the controversy to the common people, inciting revolt among those of Christian faith.

Southern Italy and Illyricum from the papal diocese to that of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The struggle was accompanied by an armed outbreak in the exarchate of Ravenna in 727, which Leo finally endeavored to subdue by means of a large fleet. This created a fierce conflict between iconoclast, who were suspicious of religious art and demanded that the Church rid itself of all such art by destroying it and the iconophiles who wanted to preserve them because they served the doctrinal teachings of the Church.

The council proclaimed the following:

"We define that the holy icons, whether in color, mosaic, or some other material, should be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on the sacred vessels and liturgical vestments, on the walls, furnishings, and in houses and along the roads, namely the icons of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, that of our Lady the Theotokos, those of the venerable angels and those of all saintly people. Whenever these representations are contemplated, they will cause those who look at them to commemorate and love their prototype. We define also that they should be kissed and that they are an object of veneration and honor (timitiki proskynisis), but not of real worship (latreia), which is reserved for Him Who is the subject of our faith and is proper for the divine nature, ... which is in effect transmitted to the prototype; he who venerates the icon, venerated in it the reality for which it stands."

John of Damascus was one of the famous defenders of icons.

Empress Theodora RESTORER OF THE VENERATION OF THE HOLY ICONS

The empress was the wife of the Byzantine emperor Theophilos the Iconoclast (829-842), but she did not share in the heresy of her husband and secretly venerated the holy icons. After the death of her husband, St. Theodora governed the realm because her son Michael was a minor.

She convened a Council, at which the Iconoclasts were anathematized, and the veneration of icons was reinstated. St. Theodora established the annual celebration of this event, the Triumph of Orthodoxy, on the first Sunday of the Great Fast. St. Theodora did much for the Holy Church and fostered a firm devotion to Orthodoxy in her son Michael.

Issues in Byzantine Iconoclasm

What accounts of iconoclast arguments remain are largely found in iconodule writings. To understand iconoclastic arguments, one must note the main points:

1. Iconoclasm condemned the making of any lifeless image (e.g. painting or statue) that was intended to represent Jesus or one of the saints.
2. For iconoclasts, the only real religious image must be an exact likeness of the prototype - of the same substance, which they considered impossible, seeing wood and paint as empty of spirit and life. Thus for iconoclasts the only true (and permitted) "icon" of Jesus was the Eucharist, which was believed to be his actual body and blood.
3. Any true image of Jesus must be able to represent both his divine nature (which is impossible because it cannot be seen nor encompassed) and his human nature (which is possible). But by making an icon of Jesus, one is separating his human and divine natures, since only the human can be depicted (separating the natures was considered Nestorianism - the doctrine where Jesus was considered two persons rathe than a unified person), or else confusing the human and divine natures, considering them one (union of the human and divine natures was considered monophysitism).
4. Icon use for religious purposes was viewed as an innovation in the Church, a Satanic misleading of Christians to return to pagan practice. "Satan misled men, so that they worshipped the creature instead of the Creator. The Law of Moses and the Prophets cooperated to remove this ruin...But the previously mentioned creator of evil...gradually brought back idolatry under the appearance of Christianity."
5. It was also seen as a departure from ancient Church tradition, of which there was a written record opposing religious images.

The chief theological opponents of iconoclasm was John of Damascus. John declared that he did not venerate matter, "but rather the Creator of matter." However he also declared, "But I also venerate the matter through which salvation came to me, as if filled with divine energy and grace." He includes in this latter category the ink in which the gospels were written as well as the paint of images, the wood of the Cross, and the body and blood of Jesus.

Empress Irene 752-803

Irene reigned for five years, from 797 to 802. Pope Leo III, who needed help against enemies in Rome and who saw the throne of the Byzantine emperor as vacant (lacking a male occupant), crowned Charlemagne as Roman Emperor in 800. This was seen as an insult to Byzantium and the Orthodox Church and caused another rift between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Nevertheless, Irene is said to have endeavored to negotiate a marriage between herself and Charlemagne; but according to Theophanes the Confessor, who alone mentions it, the scheme was frustrated by Aetios, one of her favorites.

Her zeal in restoring images and monasteries has given her a place among the saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The iconodule response to iconoclasm included:

1. Assertion that the biblical commandment forbidding images of God had been superseded by the incarnation of Jesus, who, being the second person of the Trinity, is God incarnate in visible matter. Therefore, they were not depicting the invisible God, but God as He appeared in the flesh. This became an attempt to shift the issue of the incarnation in their favor, whereas the iconoclasts had used the issue of the incarnation against them.
2. Further, in their view idols depicted persons without substance or reality, while icons depicted real persons. Essentially the argument was "all religious images not of our faith are idols; all images of our faith are icons to be venerated." This was considered comparable to the Old Testament practice of only offering burnt sacrifices to God, and not to any other gods.
3. Regarding the written tradition opposing the making and veneration of images, they asserted that icons were part of unrecorded oral tradition (parádosis, sanctioned in Orthodoxy as authoritative in doctrine by reference to 2 Thessalonians 2:15, Basil the Great, etc.).
4. Arguments were drawn from the miraculous Acheiropoieta, the supposed icon of the Virgin painted with her approval by Saint Luke, and other miraculous occurrences around icons, that demonstrated divine approval of Iconodule practices.
5. Iconodules further argued that decisions such as whether icons ought to be venerated were properly made by the church assembled in council, not imposed on the church by an emperor. Thus the argument also involved the issue of the proper relationship between church and state. Related to this was the observation that it was foolish to deny to God the same honor that was freely given to the human emperor.

Empress Irene was the wife of Leo IV. Her most notable act was the restoration of the orthodox veneration of icons or images, a policy which she had always secretly favored, though compelled to abjure it in her husband's lifetime. Having elected Tarasios, one of her partisans, to the patriarchate in 784, she summoned two church councils. The first of these, held in 786 at Constantinople, was frustrated by the opposition of the soldiers. The second, convened at Nicaea in 787, formally revived the adoration of images and reunited the Eastern Orthodox Church with that of Rome.

Sunday of Orthodoxy

The Sunday of Orthodoxy is the first Sunday of Great Lent. The dominant theme of this Sunday since 843 has been that of the victory of the icons. In that year the iconoclastic controversy, which had raged on and off since 726, was finally laid to rest, and icons and their veneration were restored on the first Sunday in Lent. Ever since, this Sunday has been commemorated as the "Triumph of Orthodoxy."

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, a service is conducted in commemoration of the affirmations of the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787 and the restoration of the use of icons in 843. Orthodox faithful carry icons in a procession.

It is becoming a common practice that the Procession of the Icons is conducted as part of a Pan-Orthodox Vespers service on the evening of the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

The Truth In Its Fullest

The Ecumenical Councils of the Church have served a critical importance. It is through these councils that the Church has been able to withstand political forces that have threatened to change the teachings of the Apostles. The great controversies that arose in the earliest days of the Church were in the end brought to a head in a council of bishops who through the Holy Spirit were able to affirm the truth of Christianity.

The Orthodox Church is known as the Church of the Seven Councils. This means that our doctrine is unchanged from the pronouncements of these councils. In the West there have been innovations from the earliest truths proclaimed by these Councils. The Eastern Orthodox Church remains true to the wisdom of these Seven Councils. This is why we say that Orthodoxy preserves the truth of the Christian faith in its fullest.

Benedict and Bartholomew meet in Istanbul.

ISTANBUL, Turkey
November 30, 2006

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Pope Benedict XVI walked alongside each other amid the sound of church bells after a day of worship, ecumenical dialogue, and fraternal embrace.

In a mutual statement of ecclesiastical solidarity, the two Church leaders renewed their commitment to work towards the restoration of Full Communion between the two Churches.

The Pope's visit to the Ecumenical Patriarchate came at the invitation of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians world-wide. It was the first visit of a Pope to the Ecumenical Patriarchate since 1979.

Pope Benedict XVI attended services celebrated by Ecumenical Patriarchal Bartholomew and his Holy Synod in the Patriarchal Cathedral of St. George for the feast day of St. Andrew the Apostle, the Patron Saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The Great Schism

What caused the split of the Church between East and West?

While the Church was unified for almost a thousand years, there developed differences in doctrine and practice that have separated them. While Orthodoxy has preserved the teachings of the first Seven Councils without change, there have been changes introduced in the other groups who call themselves Christians. We will briefly take a look at how this split occurred. Why is it important to know about this? Because this history affirms that the fundamental nature of Orthodoxy is that it's doctrines do not change and that it holds the truths as proclaimed in the Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Church.

The Great Schism must not be conceived as the result of only one specific quarrel. There were political and cultural differences that arose along with doctrinal issues. The split occurred over a long period of time and formally came to a head in 1054 in what is known as the Great Schism.

Political and Cultural divergence

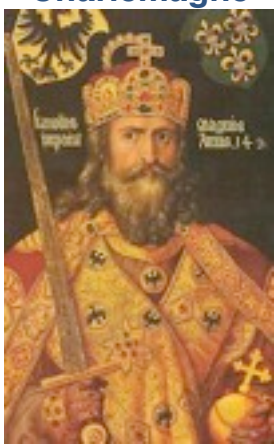
If we go back to the time of the Apostles there was a political and cultural unity because of the Roman Empire. The Empire embraced many different national groups, often with languages and dialects of their own. But all these groups were governed by the same Emperor. The Romans has assimilated the Hellenic culture so there was a broad Greco-Roman civilization in which educated people throughout the Empire shared. Both Greek and Latin was understood throughout the Empire with Greek being the common language of commerce at that time. These facts greatly assisted the early Church in its missionary work.

This unity gradually disappeared. In the third century the empire was divided into two parts, East and West with two emperors. Constantine furthered this process of separation by establishing a second imperial capital in the east, Constantinople. Then came the barbarian invasions at the start of the fifth century: apart from Italy, the west was carved up among barbarian chiefs.

The separation was carried a stage further by the rise of Islam. The Mediterranean, which the Romans once called "our sea," passed largely into Arab control. Cultural and economic contacts between the eastern and western Mediterranean became far more difficult.

Being isolated from Byzantium, the west proceeded to set up a "Roman" Empire of its own. On Christmas Day in the year 800 the Pope crowned Charles the Great, King of the Franks, as Emperor. Charlemagne sought recognition from the ruler at Byzantium, but without success. The Byzantines regarded Charlemagne as an intruder and the Papal coronation as an act of schism within the Empire.

Charlemagne



King of the Franks from 768 to his death in 814. He built a Frankish Empire that incorporated much of Western and Central Europe. He conquered Italy and was crowned Imperator Augustus by Pope Leo III on 25 December 800.

Charlemagne came to the aid of Pope Leo III, who had been attacked in the streets of Rome. He went to Rome to restore order and, after Leo purged himself of the charges against him, he was unexpectedly crowned emperor. Charlemagne wasn't pleased with this development, because it established the precedent of papal ascendancy over secular leadership, but though he still often referred to himself as a king he now also styled himself "Emperor," as well.

Charlemagne was responsible for the death of masses of people who refused to accept Christianity, or their new king.

Matters were made more difficult by problems of language. Educated men were no longer bilingual. By the year 450 there were very few in western Europe who could read Greek, and after 600, although Byzantium still called itself the Roman Empire, it was rare for a Byzantine to speak Latin. Photius, the greatest scholar in ninth century Constantinople, could not read Latin; and in 864 a "Roman" Emperor at Byzantium, Michael III, even called the language in which Virgil once wrote (Latin) "a barbarian and Scythic tongue."

Charlemagne's Court was marked at its outset by a strong anti-Greek prejudice. Men of letters in Charlemagne's entourage were not prepared to copy Byzantium, but sought to create a new Christian civilization of their own. Perhaps it is in the reign of Charlemagne that the schism of civilizations first becomes clearly apparent.

Charlemagne, rejected by the Byzantine Emperor, was quick to retaliate with a charge of heresy against the Byzantine Church. He denounced the Greeks for not using the filioque in the Creed and he declined to accept the decisions of the seventh Ecumenical Council.

The barbarian invasions and the consequent breakdown of the Empire in the west also strengthened the autocratic structure of the western Church. In the east there was a strong secular head, the Emperor, to uphold the civilized order and to enforce law. In the west, after the advent of the barbarians, there was only a plurality of warring chiefs, all more or less usurpers. For the most part it was the Papacy alone, which could act as a center of unity, as an element of continuity and stability in the spiritual and political life of western Europe. By force of circumstances, the Pope became an autocrat, an absolute monarch set up over the Church, issuing commands — in a way that few if any eastern bishops have ever done — not only to his ecclesiastical subordinates, but to secular rulers as well. The western Church became centralized to a degree unknown anywhere in the four Patriarchates of the east. There developed monarchy in the west and collegiality in the east.

There were differences in world views and how they thought. The Latin approach was more practical, the Greek more speculative. Latin thought was influenced by juridical ideas, by the concepts of Roman law, while the Greeks understood theology in the context of worship and in the light of the Holy Liturgy. When thinking about the Trinity, Latins started with the unity of the Godhead, Greeks with the threeness of the persons. When reflecting on the Crucifixion, Latins thought primarily of Christ the Victim, Greeks of Christ the Victor. Latins talked more of redemption and Greeks of deification.

Role of the Pope.

As suggested, these factors led to a different role for the Pope than the traditional role of a Patriarch. The Pope became an absolute authority over all of the Western church, while in the East there was still the sense of a conciliar approach. The Orthodox held that any doctrine difference had to include the entire Church and that no single person had the ability to make changes in doctrine. The absolute authority rested with the Ecumenical council as it had since the council of Jerusalem held by the Apostles.

Saint Photios
Patriarch of Constantinople

820-893

His greatness was not only due to his defense of Orthodoxy against heretical papal practices, but also connected to his love and meekness. He vigorously opposed the addition of the filioque clause to the Nicene - Constantinopolitan Creed, and wrote On the Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit to preserve "the purity of our religion" and to hinder "those who chose to promote any other definition of dogma than the unanimous and common faith of the pious". This treatise became the pattern for all subsequent Byzantine anti-Latin polemics.

Photios was long the standard-bearer of their church in its disagreements with the Pope of Rome.

Doctrinal divergence

The second great difficulty was the filioque. The dispute involved the words about the Holy Spirit in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Originally the Creed ran: "I believe... in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and together glorified." This, the original form, is recited unchanged by the east to this day. But, the West inserted an extra phrase "and from the Son" (in Latin, filioque), so that their Creed now reads "who proceeds from the Father and the Son." It is not certain when and where this addition was first made, but it seems to have originated in Spain, as a safeguard against Arianism. At any rate the Spanish Church interpolated the filioque at the third Council of Toledo (589), if not before. From Spain the addition spread to France and thence to Germany, where it was welcomed by Charlemagne and adopted at the semi-Iconoclast Council of Frankfort (794). It was writers at Charlemagne's Court who first made the filioque into an issue of controversy, accusing the Greeks of heresy because they recited the Creed in its original form. But Rome, with typical conservatism, continued to use the Creed without the filioque until the start of the eleventh century. In 808 Pope Leo III wrote in a letter to Charlemagne that, although he himself believed the filioque to be doctrinally sound, yet he considered it a mistake to tamper with the wording of the Creed. Leo deliberately had the Creed, without the filioque, inscribed on silver plaques and set up in Saint Peter's. For the time being Rome acted as mediator between Germany and Byzantium.

It was not until after 850 that the Greeks paid much attention to the filioque, but once they did so, their reaction was sharply critical. Orthodoxy objected (and still objects) to this addition in the Creed, for two reasons. First, the Ecumenical Councils specifically forbade any changes to be introduced into the Creed; and if an addition has to be made, certainly nothing short of another Ecumenical Council is competent to make it. The Creed is the common possession of the whole Church, and a part of the Church has no right to tamper with it. In the second place, Orthodox believe the filioque to be theologically untrue. They hold that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, and consider it a heresy to say that He proceeds from the Son as well. It may seem to many that the point at issue is so abstruse as to be unimportant. But Orthodox would say that since the doctrine of the Trinity stands at the heart of the Christian faith, a small change of emphasis in Trinitarian theology has far-reaching consequences in many other fields. Not only does the filioque destroy the balance between the three persons of the Holy Trinity: it leads also to a false understanding of the work of the Spirit in the world, and so encourages a false doctrine of the Church.

Besides the issues of the role of the Papacy and the filioque, there are certain lesser matters regarding Church worship and discipline which have caused trouble between east and west: the Greeks allowed married clergy while the Latins insisted on priestly celibacy; there are different rules of fasting; the Greeks used leavened bread in the Eucharist and the Latins use unleavened bread or "azymes."

Pope Leo III

Leo announced his election to Charlemagne, sending him the keys of Saint Peter's tomb and the banner of Rome, requesting an envoy. Charlemagne replied that it was his function to defend the church and the popes' to pray for the realm.

Leo, coming from a common-folk background, aroused the hostility of Rome's nobility. He was accused of adultery and perjury. In April 799 he was attacked by a gang, who attempted to gouge out his eyes and cut off his tongue for his earlier actions. He was formally deposed and sent to a monastery, but escaped and made his way to Charlemagne, who escorted him back to Rome under royal protection. On Christmas Day, Leo placed the imperial crown on Charlemagne's head, resurrecting the office of Emperor of the Roman Empire in the East.

Leo forbade the addition of "filioque" to Nicene Creed, which was added by Franks in Aachen in 809. He also ordered that the Nicene Creed be engraved on silver tablets so that his conclusion might not be overturned in the future.

Formal Schism 1054

The formal break came when Michael Cerularius was Patriarch of Constantinople and St. Leo Pope in Rome. In 1053, Cerularius circulated a treatise criticizing in strong terms the practices of the Western church. Cerularius said the fact that Catholics did not allow their clergy to marry was contrary to scripture and tradition. He objected to the Catholics use of unleavened bread in their Eucharist. But his most serious concern was that the Latin Church had added the word "filioque" to the Nicene Creed, saying the Holy Spirit proceeded from both Father and Son.

Cerularius excommunicated all bishops of Constantinople who used the Western ritual and closed down their churches. This incensed Leo. He demanded that Cerularius submit to the Pope. Any church which refused to recognize the pontiff as supreme was an assembly of heretics, he said - a synagogue of Satan. The Eastern patriarch wasn't about to accept this characterization. The five patriarchs, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome were equals in his eyes. The bishop of Rome, as patriarch of the West, was given the courtesy title of "first among equals" and in a tie vote he could make the final determination according to tradition. Rome's growing claims to authority were deemed unacceptable to the other patriarchs, who believed (and who still believe) that Christ alone is the head of the Church.

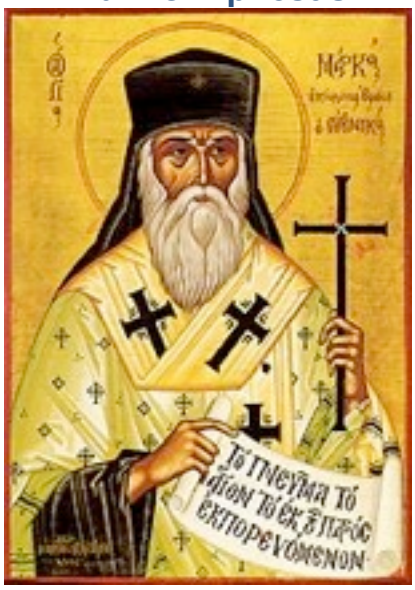
Leo sent legates, headed by an unyielding man, Cardinal Humbert, to discuss the issues. Before they could complete their mission, Leo died. Humbert was so rude to Cerularius that Cerularius refused to speak with him. Aggravated by this treatment, the legates marched into St. Sophia on July 6, 1054, and placed a bull on the altar, excommunicating Cerularius. After this act, Humbert made a grand exit, shaking the dust off his feet and calling on God to judge.

Cerularius convoked a council and once more blasted Western practices. Humbert was anathematized. The Orthodox condemned all who had drawn up the bull. There was now no chance of reconciliation between the factions. The once united Church was now divided into two: Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic.

In more recent times there have been further differences.

In 1582 Pope Gregory XIII introduced the new, Gregorian calendar and the East still uses the old Julian calendar to determine the date of Pascha. Consequently, East and West celebrate Pascha on different dates.

Mark of Ephesus



Mark of Ephesus (Evgenikos), Pillar of Orthodoxy, was famous for his courageous defense of Orthodoxy at the Council of Florence (1439 A.D.) in spite of the emperor and the pope of Rome. He held Rome to be in schism and heresy for its acceptance of the Filioque clause added to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and for the claims of the papacy to universal jurisdiction over the Church, and was thus the only Eastern bishop to refuse to sign the decrees of the council.

He died peacefully in the year 1452 A.D. On his death bed, Mark implored Gregory, his disciple, and later Patriarch Gennadius, to be careful of the snares of the West and to defend Orthodoxy.

In the 1800's the Roman Catholic Church established both Papal Infallibility and Mary's Immaculate Conception to be dogmas of the universal Church. They also brought numerous Byzantine Rite communities in Eastern Europe and the Ukraine into communion with Rome, forming the greater part of the Byzantine Catholic Church.

In 1950 the Pope defined Mary's Assumption (aka Dormition) as a dogma.

The Crusades

The Crusades were a series of military conflicts of a religious character waged by Christians during 1095–1291, most of which were sanctioned by the Pope in the name of Christendom. The Crusades originally had the goal of recapturing Jerusalem and the sacred "Holy Land" from Muslim rule and were originally launched in response to a call from the Eastern Orthodox Byzantine Empire for help against the expansion of the Muslim Seljuq dynasty into Anatolia.

The Crusades were never referred to as such by their participants. The original crusaders were known by various terms, including fideles Sancti Petri (the faithful of St. Peter) or milites Christi (knights of Christ). They saw themselves as undertaking a peregrinatio, a pilgrimage, though pilgrims were usually forbidden from carrying arms. Like pilgrims, each crusader swore a vow (a votus), to be fulfilled on successfully reaching Jerusalem, and they were granted a cloth cross (crux) to be sewn into their clothes.

1st Crusade : 1096 to 1099

2nd Crusade : 1147 to 1149

3rd Crusade : 1189 to 1192

4th Crusade : 1201 to 1204

5th Crusade : 1218 to 1221

6th Crusade : 1228 to 1229

7th Crusade : 1248 to 1254

8th Crusade : 1270

How did the Crusades impact the East?

The Crusades made the split firm. For those in the East the crusades were seen as "Frank Invasions". The first crusade was a bloody success. The first city sacked was Antioch. While under Muslim control, Antioch was inhabited primarily by Christians. It was sacked and pillaged. Antioch was followed by Jerusalem in 1099. As a result of the invasion Latin Patriarchs were set up leaving the cities under two patriarchs, those who were appointed by Constantinople and those appointed by the conquerers with allegiance to Rome. The worst was the 4th Crusade (1204) which was a disaster and disgrace. The Crusades were originally bound for Egypt and then to go to the Holy Land, but it was delayed and the mercenary soldiers were running out of money and set out on a campaign for stolen goods. Constantinople was the richest city in the world at the time. This is where they headed and defeated the Byzantine Army and sacked the city. They destroyed churches and undertook systematic acts of sacrilege. Women and children were killed and women raped. It was a horrible scene. The holy relics were stolen and many that are to this day seen throughout Europe came from this Crusade as Constantinople was the center of Christianity and its most precious relics. The Latins then set up a government and their own bishops. All this was done with the blessing of the Pope in Rome.

Ottoman Empire

Most of Greece was part of the Ottoman Empire from the 14th century until its declaration of independence in 1821. The Ottoman Turks first crossed into Europe in 1354. The Byzantine Empire, which had ruled most of the Greek-speaking world for over 1100 years, had been fatally weakened since the sacking of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204. Having defeated the Bulgarians in 1371 and the Serbs in 1389, the Ottomans advanced south into Greece proper, capturing Athens in 1458. The Greeks held out in the Peloponnese until 1460, and the Venetians and Genoese clung to some of the islands, but by 1500 most of the plains and islands of Greece were in Ottoman hands. The mountains of Greece were largely untouched, and were a refuge for Greeks to flee foreign rule. Cyprus fell in 1571, and the Venetians retained Crete until 1670. The Ionian Islands were only briefly ruled by the Ottomans (Kefalonia from 1479 to 1481 and 1485 to 1500), and remained primarily Venietian territory during the period in question.

Attempts at Reunion

After the Crusades the hatred was high in the East against the Western world. Now the split became generally accepted. There were firm doctrinal differences such as the "filioque" and each claimed to be the True Church. Shortly after the forth crusade Constantinople was recaptured by Emperor Michael VIII in 1261. But the impact of the fourth crusade was such an economic, political and military blow to the Empire it proved to be a mortal. This was the beginning of the end of the Roman Empire.

Michael sought alliances to protect him from the onslaught of the Turks and thought that a reunion of the Church was a prerequisite to security. There was a council meeting that took place in Lyons in 1274 in which a union was agreed to. The Eastern Church accepted the "filioque" clause. But there was a popular uprising because the political nature of this agreement was seen by the people and the monks in the monasteries.

Again in 1438 Emperor John VIII sought political and military assistance and another council was held at Florence. The Emperor and the Patriarch attended and the East agreed to the Western doctrine and to keep their different rites. Again it was rejected by the populous and repudiated by its Eastern signers. In 1453 Constantinople fell to the Turks and all of the east was under Muslim rule. This lasted for 400 years. Orthodox Christianity entered a long period of suppression.

Today, the Ecumenical Patriarch continually works towards unity of the Church, but without giving up what Orthodoxy has stood true to for over 2000 years.

Reformation

What role did the Orthodox Church play in the Reformation in the 16th Century?

The Eastern Church had split some 500 years earlier and none of the issues that led to the formation of the Protestant churches were issues in the Orthodox Church. This movement, which saw the breaking away of many churches in Northern Europe, was due mainly to a corrupt and heretical view on the use of indulgences as penance. In short people could buy their way to heaven. Also the appointment to positions in the Church was influenced by monetary contributions. In objecting to these corrupt practices much of Holy Tradition was rejected and a fall back to a reliance only on Scripture as the basis of truth emerged. At this time innovative doctrines such as salvation by faith alone were developed. All this lead to thousands of branches of Christianity due to different individual interpretations of Scripture.

The Eastern Churches continued their path unchanged under the Ottomans. Also at this time there was the rise of Orthodoxy throughout Russia. It became the center of activity for the Orthodox Church at this time even though they still held Constantinople in high honor. Here there were many monasteries and seminaries for training clergy. In short the teaching of the Church remained virtually unchanged relying of the doctrine that had been established in the Seven Ecumenical Councils as the basis of the Truth taught by the Apostles. The Tradition was passed on through the Russian Church and the Church under Muslim rule. Orthodoxy retained its unbroken historical and theological connection to the New Testament Church.

Russian Orthodox Church
Patriarchate of Moscow

In 863-869, Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius translated parts of the Bible into the Old Church Slavonic language paving the way for the Christianization of the Slavs. Vladimir the Great, made Kievan Rus' a Christian state in 988.

In 1914 there were 55,173 Russian Orthodox churches and 29,593 chapels, 112,629 priests and deacons, 550 monasteries and 475 convents with a total of 95,259 monks and nuns. The Russian empire was dissolved and the Tsarist government was overthrown.

The Soviet Union was the first state to have as an ideological objective the elimination of religion. The Communist regime confiscated church property, ridiculed religion, harassed believers, and propagated atheism in the schools. In the first five years after the Bolshevik revolution, 28 bishops and 1,200 priests were executed. By 1987 the number of functioning churches in the Soviet Union had fallen to 6893.

In December, 2006, the Church had over 27,000 parishes, 169 bishops, 713 monasteries, two universities, five theological academies and 75 theological schools in the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Church in America

How was the Greek Orthodox Church brought to America?

The Greeks suffered 400 years of Oppression and persecution under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The movement for Greece's Independence took place on March 25, 1821 and independence was realize in 1829. The period following the fall of the Ottoman Empire was filled with poor economic conditions and instability especially in the Balkans. In 1923 as the result of the negotiations to end World War I there was a population exchange between what is now Turkey and Greece. There were over 2,000,000 involved in this massive disruption of normal life. Then Greece fell under the occupation of the Axis powers during World War II. In 1941 to 1944 there was a blockade by the Allies which led to a great famine in Greece where over 300,000 died of starvation. Then, followed a civil war that pitted family against family.

During these periods of conflict and struggle people left Greece to establish a better life for themselves. The United States was one of the better places for them to seek a new life. Thousands and thousands came. Many stayed long enough to earn money and return. Others stayed and sent a major portion of their income back to help families left behind and still struggling. Over 500,000 Greeks arrived in the United States between 1890 and 1924 another 200,000 between 1946 and 1982. As the immigrants came they brought their Church with them. The immigrants established the first Orthodox Church in 1864 in New Orleans.

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North America

Archbishop Demetrios

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North America was incorporated in 1921. In 1908, the Church of Greece received authority over the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese but in 1922, Patriarch Meletios IV transfered the archdiocese back to the jurisdiction of the Church of Constantinople.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is composed of an Archdiocesan district (New York City) and eight metropolises (or dioceses): New Jersey, Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Boston and Denver. It is governed by the Archbishop and the Eparchial Synod of Metropolitans. The Synod is headed by the Archbishop (as the first among equals) and comprised of the Metropolitans who oversee the ministry and operations of their respective metropolises. It has all the authority and responsibility which the Church canons provide for a provincial synod.

There are more than 500 parishes, 800 priests and 21 monastic communities.

Chapter 2

Who is God?

How can we know God? What does the Bible tells us about God? What does the doctrine of the Holy Trinity tell us about God? How do the Church Fathers explain the Trinity?

How do we know God?

How do we begin to get knowledge of God?

Where do we get Knowledge of God?

How do we avoid self-delusion?

What does the Bible tell us about God?

What are the attributes of God?

What does the doctrine of the Holy Trinity tell us about God?

Why is this doctrine so important?
How do the Church Fathers explain the Holy Trinity?

What are some practical benefits of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity?

How does the Holy Trinity operate in Christian LIfe?
How does it relate to our Salvation?

What is "filioque"?

Why do Orthodox talk about the "filioque"?

God is a sea of being, immeasurable and limitless.

Saint Gregory the Theologian

In this chapter we address the question, How do you know God? We will start by explaining why you can't know God in His totality as He is "unknowable." But, we will show you how you can know God by experience - your own and that which is recorded in the Holy Scriptures. We will caution you to beware of relying on your own mind to give you the truth about God and thinking that you know too much about God. We will address how you avoid self-delusion.

What can we learn from Scriptures? We can learn some of the attributes of God. We will point out how Scripture tells us that God is Spirit, Eternal, Good, Omniscient, All-Righteous, Omnipresent, Unchangeable and Unity.

One of the important doctrines of Christianity is the Holy Trinity. What is this doctrine and how did the early Church Fathers explain it? We will give you some of their answers. You must remember that you cannot define God because He is infinite. Therefore, a doctrine like the Holy Trinity is not within our rational comprehension. It is a way to set boundaries that keep us from making an error about the nature of God. In the early Church doctrine was formulated to counteract heresies where the teaching of the Apostles was being distorted. This was done through the Church Councils, which have served to keep the truth about God pure and unchanged from the time of the Apostles.

But, what are the practical uses of the Doctrine of the Trinity in our everyday lives? We will discuss how it can help you learn about your human relationships and your relationship to God.

Finally, we will give you a brief introduction to one of the controversies that was involved in the split of the Church between East and West about 1,000 years ago - the "filioque".

Theophany

The Trinity is revealed in the Baptism of the Lord, which is called "Theophany."

"When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt 3:16-17)

How Do We Know God?

God is the Lord and has revealed Himself unto us; blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord
(Ps 118:26-27)

We are born with an inner urge to know God. But God is not visible and often seems so distant. We thirst for knowledge of God and often don't know where to look. We must first of all realize that God is not physical, not a mental concept and not something we can construct by philosophical reasoning. God can be experienced. But how?

I Am Who Is

The first words in our creed are "I believe". Our confession is based on faith and is not founded on rational grounds. There are no proofs based on a logical examination of facts. It is based on an inner conviction with a moral foundation. To believe in God means that we acknowledge God with our minds and that we strive towards Him with our hearts. As Orthodox Christians we believe in that which is inaccessible to our outward experience, such as knowledge gained through scientific exploration or what is observed by us through our senses. Our faith is based on a mystical revelation in our soul. With it comes a feeling of love, fear, veneration, reverence and humility. Our faith is a reality that binds us with the source of all life and power - our God. As Paul says, *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* (Heb 11:1).

Can we know God's essence?

God in His essence is incomprehensible. The Apostle Paul tells us, God is *"unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see"* (1Tim. 6:16). Paul is telling us, by speaking of an *"unapproachable light,"* that we cannot know the essence of God, but we can experience His energies. We do have some knowledge of God based on what He has revealed of Himself to us. But, this knowledge is never complete. Paul writes, *"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, and I know in part"* (1Cor. 13:12). What we seek is something that can only be seen "dimly" and is only partially known.

Saint Basil the Great writes ,

> *If you wish to speak or hear about God, renounce your own body, renounce your bodily senses, pass over the seasons of the year, their orderly arrangements, the adornments of the earth; stand above the ether, traverse the stars, their splendor, grandeur, the profit*

Hospitality of Abraham

Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth (oak) trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. ...and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them,... and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest... that you may refresh your hearts. (Gen 18:1-5)

Affirming the presence of the Holy Trinity, Abraham then addresses one of the angels in the singular, as *thou* and *Lord,* while the three together are spoken of with the plural, as *you.* It becomes even more clear as one reads on that one of the three angels is a type of *the Incarnate Word, God the Son who will in the future take human form.*

which they provide for the whole world, their good order, brightness, arrangement, movement, and the bond or distance between them. Having passed through all this in your mind, go about heaven and, standing above it, with your thought alone, observe the beauties which are there: the armies of angels, which are above the heavens, the chiefs of the archangels, the glory of the Dominions, the presiding of the Thrones, the Powers, Principalities, Authorities. Having gone past all this and left below the whole of creation in your thoughts, raising your mind beyond the boundaries of it, present to your mind the essence of God, unmoving, unchanging, unalterable, dispassionate, simple, incomplex, indivisible, unapproachable light, unutterable power, infinite magnitude, resplendent glory, most desired goodness, immeasurable beauty that powerfully strikes the wounded soul, but cannot worthily be depicted in words"

How do we begin to get knowledge of God?

We begin by confessing our ignorance about the essence of God. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (315 - 386) tells us, "We explain not what God is, but candidly confess that we have no exact knowledge concerning Him. For in what concerns God, to confess our ignorance is the best knowledge." We cannot think of God in terms of a philosophy. Words cannot define God, but why? Because, this would limit God to our own reasonableness. We are part of His creation and therefore less than God. The Creator must be larger than the created. God is infinite and beyond all human reason. About all we can say about God is that He isn't this, but also, He isn't that either. This is known as "apophatic theology" where we define God by what we know He is not. We can set boundaries that help us to know God, but never totally describe Him. We can say that God is not physically visible or is not a creation. The key is that we must be careful not to use our reason to derive a definition of God beyond what has been revealed to us through Scripture and Tradition or our direct experience of Him. For this ends up being only our own mental creation. It is necessary to go beyond words and reason to understand the true nature of the Divine. The starting point to knowing God is to accept that we are not searching for a definition that can be put into words, but a relationship with Him.

Reblev Icon

This famous icon of the Trinity by Andrew Rublev takes the coming of the three angels to Abraham at Mamre as a veiled appearance of the Trinity. When we see this same icon with Abraham and Sarah behind the three figures, it is called "The Hospitality of Abraham".

What is so different from the Western depictions of the Trinity is the equality of the three figures and the way the eye moves from one to the other in a circular or triangular way.

From left to right, the figures represent the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Because God is beyond our sight, He is shown in strangely vague-colored robes. We see the Son cloaked in blue, traditional color of the incarnation, and the Holy Spirit in green, the color of life and power. Later renderings of the Trinity follow Rublev's composition, unrivaled in its harmony and clarity.

Where do we get Knowledge of God?

First, we can know Him through His Creation: ourselves, nature, and all of creation. All of this we can observe. Apostle Paul tells us, "*For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead*" (Rom. 1:20). We can observe his wonders in the beauty of a flower, the flight of a bird, the snow caps of vast mountains or the beauty of a bubbling brook. We can see his vastness by the mystery of life of all forms, especially our own, and all its dimensions physical, mental, social, and spiritual. We can find it in the wonder and joy of the birth of a new child or the tender love a mother has for her newborn child.

Second, God revealed Himself to us through the Incarnation of the Son of God. God sent to us His only begotten Son who lived in the flesh. This is what is recorded in the New Testament. He also spoke to us through the prophets of the Old Testament. The incarnation of God himself as fully human gives us a most vivid way of knowing God. The Apostles are our best sources for information on this. Paul writes, "*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son*" (Heb. 1:1-2). And John says, "*And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true*" (1John 5:20). So, one of the reasons God sent His Son to us was so we could know more about the nature of God.

So the answer to the question, "Where do we get the knowledge about God?", is through our observation of Creation, the Scriptures and especially the life of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Beware of self-delusion

Knowing God is something that we cannot do on our own, because our minds are clouded by all the activities and assumptions of our current culture that basically denies God. We can easily make up theories based on assumptions buried deep in our subconscious mind. We must be aware that our mind can easily deceive us and even lead us into believing that there is no God. We need to be very careful. This does not mean that we don't use our minds to know God, but we must have caution and seek proper guidance. To know God as best we can, we need to follow the guidance of those who have purified their minds through an exemplary Christian life allowing themselves to become capable of contemplating the exalted truths. In the Book of Matthew Jesus tells us, *Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.* (Matt. 5:8) Such people are often referred to as holy persons. Our Holy Church Fathers were supreme examples of such a person. Most commonly, our parish Priest is a good one to start with to help us along the path to knowing God. Alternately, a monk at a local monastery can also be helpful to us.

What does the Bible tell us about God?

Here are some references to what is said about God in the Bible:

When Moses stood at the burning bush and asked by what name should he call Him, God replied, *I AM WHO I AM* (Ex. 3:14) (Jehovah in Hebrew)

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (Rev 1:8)

God is Spirit - the words to the Samaritan woman (John 4:24)

The Lord is that Spirit (II Cor 3:17)

God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5)

God is love (I John 4:8, 16)

Our God is a consuming fire (Heb 12:29)

The Fathers of the Orthodox Church use the expression, "He who is above all being" to describe God. Since we cannot know His essence we can only speak of some attributes of God. Saint Gregory the Theologian writes, "God is a sea of being, immeasurable and limitless." Saint Basil the Great says, "God is the fullness of all qualities and perfections in their highest and infinite form." Saint Ireanaeus of Lyons tells us, God "is simple and incomplex; He is entirely feeling, entirely spirit, entirely thought, entirely mind, entirely source of all good things."

Attributes of God

We can only speak of the attributes of God, but not of His essence. Here are some of the attributes of God we know from what has been revealed to us. You need to loosen your rational mind and allow these attributes to resonate with your own essence. Meditate on them and allow your mind to embrace what is not totally rational. Knowing God is more like getting to know a new friend than learning a new subject. Remember that whatever you think God is, that He is not. God is <u>not</u> definable. The following are attributes, qualities or characteristics, but not definitions of God. They cannot limit God in any way.

God as Spirit

God is Spirit (John 4:24)

The Lord is a Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (IICor 3:17)

God as Eternal

Of old You laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.
They will perish, but You will endure;
Yes, they will all grow old like a garment;
Like a cloak You will change them,
And they will be changed.
But You are the same,
And Your years will have no end. (Ps. 102:25-27)

From Scripture

Saint John the Theologian writes, *"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me."* (John 15:26)

We can see that this relationship shows the mystical inner relations of the Persons in God and the life of God within Himself.

Saint Matthew says, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* (Matt 28:19)

Saint Paul tells us, *"The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God , and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen."* (II Cor. 13:14)

Again, from the words of Saint John the Theologian, *"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one."* (1John 5:7)

The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity

It has been a part of Church Doctrine since Apostolic times. Saint Polycarp (70 - 155) writes, "O Lord God almighty...I bless you and glorify you through the eternal and heavenly high priest Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, through whom be glory to you, with Him and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever" The Trinitarian doctrine was formalized in the First Ecumenical Council at Nicea in 325. At this council there were 318 bishops and over 1500 attendees. At the time there was an innovator named Arius from Alexandria who had a different idea about the nature of God. He believed that the Son was only a creature. This meant that there was a time when Christ did not exist. The Church Fathers came together to defend the Apostolic truth. The Apostolic Tradition was upheld and the Creed which we recite to this day was formulated. In their defense of the Tradition they used the example of martyrs who stood witness to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They also used the writings of the Apostolic Fathers and other ancient Christian writers. They quoted expressions that were used in the Divine services including the small doxology and others. They also pointed out that the Trinitarian expression was used in baptism from the first days of the Church. The defense was overwhelming with evidence of the true path.

God as All Good

The Lord is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. (Ps 103:8)
God is love (1John 4:16)

God as All-Knowing

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. (Heb 4:13)
Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. (Ps 139:16)
Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! (Rom 11:33)

God as All-Righteous

Means both holiness and justice.
Holiness is the presence of higher spiritual values, joined to purity from sin. Angels constantly testify to the holiness of God by ceaselessly crying out *Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!* (Is 6:3)
He shall judge the world in righteousness (Ps 9:8)
The Lord *will render to each one according to his deeds,*
For there is no partiality with God. (Rom 2:6, 11)

God as Almighty - All-Powerful

For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. (Ps 33:9)
He is the Pantocrator, the almighty or the one who rules over all.
He is the one *Who only does wondrous things!* (Ps 72:18)

God as Omnipresent - Present everywhere at the same time.

Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend into heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there Your hand shall lead me,
And Your right hand shall hold me. (Ps 139:7-10)

God is not subject to limits of space, but He fills everything. He is present in every place.
"The Divinity penetrates everything without being mingled with anything, but nothing can penetrate Him." (St. John Damascene)
"That God is present everywhere we know, but how, we do not understand, because we can understand only a sensuous presence, and it is not given to us to

Making the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The right hand is used. The thumb, index, and middle finger are brought to a point. They are then placed on the forehead, then moved down to the sternum, and then from the right shoulder to the other.

As one moves through the Sign, one recites, at the forehead, "In the name of the Father"; at the stomach, "and of the Son"; across the shoulders, "and of the Holy Spirit"; and in the end, "Amen." There are several interpretations, according to Church Fathers: the forehead symbolizes the Heaven; the stomach, the Earth; the shoulders, the place and sign of power. Also, the hand to the forehead may be seen as a prayer to the Father for wisdom; the hand to the stomach as a prayer to the Son who become incarnate; and the hand to the shoulders as a prayer to the Holy Spirit.

The thumb, index and middle finger brought to a point symbolize the Trinity, three persons sharing a single essence. The remaining two fingers are kept pressed close together and to the palm, representing the human and divine natures united in Jesus Christ.

understand fully the Nature of God." (Saint John Chrysostom)

God as Unchangeable

In *the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.* (James 1:17)

God as Self-Sufficing to Himself and All-Blessed

Self-sufficing signifies the fullness of possession, complete blessedness, the fullness of all good things.

In God is the *sufficiency* of all good things. *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!* Exclaims Apostle Paul, or *of Him and through Him and to Him are all things.* (Romans 11:33, 26)

God has no need for anything, since *He gives to all life, breath, and all things.* (Acts 17:25)

He is all blessed - *according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God* (1 Tim 1:11)*; which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords.* (1Tim 6:15)

God as Unity

There is no God but one. (1Cor 8:4)

Gregory Palamas (1296 - 1359)

He was a monk of Mount Athos in Greece and later Archbishop of Thessalonica known as a preeminent theologian of Hesychasm.

He defended the Orthodox Church from the charges of Barlaam of Calabria who believed that philosophers had better knowledge of God than did the prophets, and valued education and learning more than contemplative prayer.

Gregory said that the prophets in fact had greater knowledge of God, because they had actually seen or heard God. Addressing the question of how it is possible for man to have knowledge of a transcendent and unknowable God, he drew a distinction between knowing God in his essence (Greek ousia) and knowing God in his energies (Greek energeiai) - workings or activities.

Gregory asserted that when Peter, James and John witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor, that they were seeing the uncreated light of God; and that it is possible for others to be granted to see that same uncreated light of God with the help of certain spiritual disciplines and contemplative prayer, but not in any automatic or mechanistic fashion.

God's Uncreated Energies

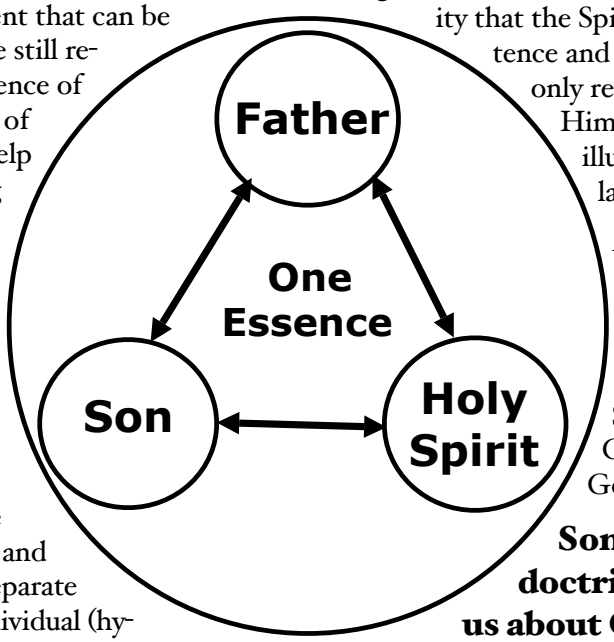
Saint Basil the Great writes, "the energies are numerous and the essence of God simple and what we know when we say God is in fact His energies. We do not pressure to approach His essence. His energies come down to us, but His essence remains beyond our reach." Our Church Fathers tell us that although God is incomprehensible by nature, He comes in range of our experience by His energies. This means that He can be contemplated in things that point to Him.

We find numerous references to grace and light and these are all what we term uncreated. They are manifested by God to sanctify and transfigure all that God has made. Saint Maximos the Confessor says, that "God has created us in order that we may become partakers of the Divine Nature, that we may enter into eternity, that we may resemble Him, that is, being deified by His grace through which all things were made. The Divine uncreated light has the purpose of uniting the creation with God. It is a visitation from the future age to come and is often called by the Fathers the "light of the eighth Day." This is the same light that Paul experienced on his way to Damascus. There are countless Scriptural references to Light: "*God is Light*" (1John 1:5); "*I am the light of the world*" (John 8:12); "*the righteous shall shine as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father*" (Matt 13:43). These references to light cannot be understood as similes because numerous saints report Light as the presence of Divinity.

We can not know the essence of God , but we can experience his energies and be united with the uncreated light of God and through Grace be made like Him. This is the path to Theosis which is a fundamental teaching of the Orthodox Church.

Holy Trinity: What does this doctrine tell us about God?

Because God is impossible to define, members of the early church faced many differences regarding the nature of God. They were afraid that the teaching of the Apostles was being distorted. God had revealed Himself in different ways in the Scriptures and some had difficulty making sense out of these differences. To help resolve such problems, the early Church Fathers engaged in an effort to set a boundary around this great mystery of Who is God. They did not define God, but provided a framework to help us to know God as He has been revealed. The result is not a simple statement that can be fully explained, because there still remains the mystery of the essence of God. The resulting doctrine of the Holy Trinity is a gift to help us know more fully the living realty of our God.



The word Trinity is a combination of two words meaning three and unity. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity tells us that God is three persons in total unity. He is one in essence, but has shown Himself to us as three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These are separate persons (hypostasis) with individual (hypostatic) attributes, yet all one in essence. Make sense? Probably not completely, because there is a mystery involved that cannot be totally explained.

How can it be one yet be three persons? This is the unexplainable mystery, the unknowable aspect of God. It is the boundary we have been given. There is not more than one God. Yet, God does not appear to us as only one Person. Think about what kind of relationship would exists between three persons who are really one in essence? Meditating on this question will give you an idea of the kind of relationship we can have with God and the true meaning of God's infinite love.

There have been many misunderstandings about the nature of the Trinity. One is that the Father is God and the Son and Holy Spirit are only creations of the Father. But, this makes them creatures. The revealed Word shows us that both the Son and the Holy Spirit are uncreated and divine along with the Father. They act with the Father in the act of Creation so cannot be created. They are not creatures.

Another misunderstanding is the idea that God merely appears in different forms - sometimes as Father, others as the Son, or sometimes as the Holy Spirit. But, Scripture clearly says that both the Son and Spirit are "of God" and not merely aspects of God. Both the Son and Holy Spirit are realities with different personalities. They are not just different forms.

A third error is where the Son and Spirit are simply names for relationships that God has with Himself. Again such a view does not leave room for the reality that the Spirit and the Son have an existence and life of their own. If they were only relations that God has with Himself then they would be mere illusions. They are not simply relationships.

An extreme view is that they are really different gods. The Father is one, the Son another, and the Holy Spirit a third. But again we know from Scripture that there is only one God. They are not multiple Gods.

Some of the things the doctrine of the Trinity tells us about God.

1. One God, One Father: There is only one God because there is only one Father.

In the Bible the term "God", with very few exceptions, is used primarily as a name for the Father. Thus, the Son is the "Son of God," and the Spirit is the "Spirit of God." The Son is born from the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father -- both in the same timeless and eternal action of the Father's own being. In this view, the Son and the Spirit are both one with God and in no way separated from Him. Thus, the Divine Unity consists of the Father, with His Son and His Spirit distinct from Himself and yet perfectly united together in Him.

2. One God, One Divine Nature and Being: What the Father is, the Son and Spirit are also.

The Son, born of the Father, and the Spirit, proceeding from Him, share the divine nature with God, being "of one essence" with Him. Every attribute of divinity which belongs to God the Father -- life, love, wisdom, truth, blessedness, holiness, power, purity, joy -- belongs equally as well to the Son and the Holy Spirit. The being, nature, essence, existence and life of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are absolutely and identically one and the same.

3. One God: One Divine Action and Will: Whatever the Father wills, the Son and the Holy Spirit also will.

Since they are one, whatever the Father wills, the Son and the Holy Spirit will also. Whatever the Father does, the Son and Holy Spirit do also. There is no will and no action of God the Father which is not at the same time the will and action of the Son and the Holy Spirit. You see the unity here? Every action of God is the action of the Three. No one person of the Trinity acts independently of or in isolation from the others. The action of each is the action of all; the action of all is the action of each. The divine action is essentially one.

4. One God, One Divine Knowledge and Love: Each knows the same Truth and exercises the same Love. Since they are one, they all have the same truth and exercise the same love. Each person of the Trinity knows and loves the others with such absolute perfection, knowledge, and love that there is nothing unknown and nothing unloved of each in the others. Think about this. If the creaturely knowledge of men can unite minds in full unanimity, and if the creaturely love of men can bring the divided together into one heart and one soul and even one flesh as in marriage, how incomparably more perfect and absolutely uniting must be the oneness when the Knowers and Lovers are eternal and divine.

5. Three Divine Persons

What do we mean when we say they are a person? The Greek word is hypostasis. A person is one who has existence and life - a hypostasis.
God the Father is known as unbegotten. The Son is pre-eternally begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. While we are taught about the distinction between being begotten and proceeding, we do not know fully what this distinction means. It highlights their differing personalities. We have to remember that we are trying to describe God who is indescribable. These descriptions help us to know more about what God is not, rather than what he is. He is not a single person but three who are in essence one.

How do the Church Fathers explain the Holy Trinity?

One way our early Church Fathers explain this doctrine of the Trinity is to think of three people. Then ask, what are they? And you answer, they are humans. As humans they are the same, but when we ask who they are we find that individually they are totally different. They share the same human nature (essence in the case of God) and have the following attribute: created, temporal, physical, rational, etc. When we ask what God is, we come up with attributes such as ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever existing, and eternally the same. But, when we ask who is God we find the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Just like when we ask about what a human being is we identify some common attributes of their sameness, but when we ask who they are then we begin to identify that differences in their personalities. In the revelation of God to us through the Scripture, we see that He has been shown to us in three different persons, but when we seek as to find what each is we come up with the same attributes surrounding His unknowable essence.

Some of the other ways the early Church Fathers attempted to explain the unexplainable were as follows: the sun and its rays of light; the root, trunk and fruit of a tree are different parts of one thing called a tree; a spring of water, the fountain, and the river that feeds it; three candles burning simultaneously giving off a single light; fire and the warmth and light that result. Saint Gregory the Theologian writes, “I have carefully considered this matter with my own mind,... to find some likeness..., but have been unable to discover anything on earth with which to compare the Nature of the Godhead.” So no matter what analogies we come up with, they are all unsatisfactory to explain the unity and diversity of the Holy Trinity to the satisfaction of our rational minds. We must accept with humbleness the mystery that surrounds knowledge of God.

What are some practical benefits of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity?

Holy Trinity indicates a closeness to God.

We can think of God the Father as being above us as the ever flowing source of love. The Son of God is with us begotten by the Father. The Holy Spirit is in us and all creation. This affirms that God is in all places and fills all things. God is always with and close to us.

Divine Love

Each person of the Trinity knows the same Truth and exercises he same love. The love of each is the Love of all. There is nothing unknown and nothing unloved of each in the other. It is a model of perfect love. Think about this loving relationship. If we unite our minds in full unanimity with another person and act as with one mind and soul what would this be like?. Isn't this what happens in the sacrament of marriage where the couple is united to become one flesh?. In a marriage we are called to model this perfect love. The knowledge of one is to become the knowledge of the other. The intimacy gained in a marital relationship strives toward this end. They are to have the same love for each other. One is the love for the other. There is to be nothing unknown and nothing unloved of each in the other. As you can see, the Trinity is the model of perfect love to be attained in marriage.

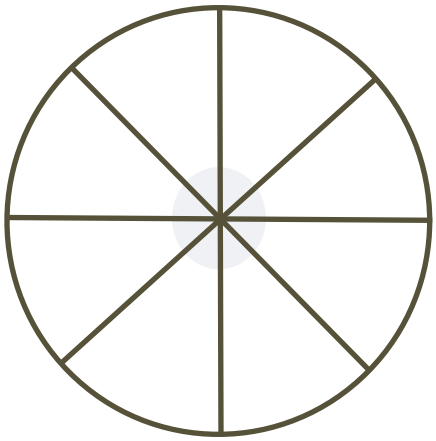
Dorotheos of Gaza has a useful model about love. He says that "the closer we are to God, the closer we become to one another. The closer we are to one another the closer we become to God." We can think of this relationship as spokes in a wheel with God at the hub. As we move from the rim to the center towards God we come closer together. The more we learn to love in our marriage, the closer we will come to God. This is the path of a married person to take for salvation, to continually work on this loving relationship to help them both come closer to God.

How does the Holy Trinity Operate in Christian Life?

Christ gave us the new commandment for Christian life. He commanded us "*to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*" (Mt 5:48). He also said, "*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you*" (Jn 15:12). To carry out this love means to be like the relationship that exists in the Holy Trinity which may seem like an impossibility. But Christ also told us that we cannot live the Christian life without the grace of the Holy Spirit. "For with God all things are possible." (Mk 10:27) We can become like Christ, doing the things that he did and becoming sons of God in Him by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ showed us how and the Holy Spirit now provides us with God's grace to become like God.

How does it relate to our Salvation?

After the Fall, God took special actions for our salvation. The Word and the Spirit are sent to the Old Testament saints. The Word "incarnates" himself in the Law as given to Moses. The Spirit inspires the Prophets to encourage the people to honor and recognize their creator. Both the Law and the Prophets are revelations of God. Throughout the Old Testament, there are partial revelations, or "shadows," as the New Testament calls them, that prefigure the total revelation in the "fullness of time" of the Incarnation.



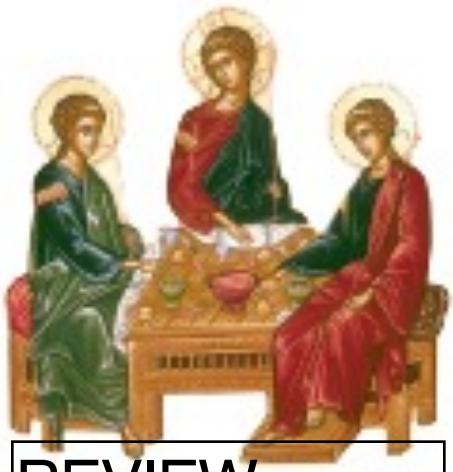
Once the world was made ready:The Virgin is prepared. The Word becomes flesh. The only-begotten Son is born fully man and fully God. Then through His teachings, sacrificial death and Resurrection He claims victory over death (the principle power of the devil), and shows us the way to union with God. After His Ascension, the Holy Spirit is given to all men, making them sons of the Father, capable of attaining His perfection (theosis) by growing forever, ***"to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."*** (Eph 4:13)

In the NT we have the full manifestation of the Holy Trinity: the Father through the Son in the Spirit to us; and we in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. The essence of Orthodox Christianity is the "acquisition of the Holy Spirit" and the "deification" of man by the grace of God, or theosis. The Fathers of the Church unanimously claim that Christian life is the participation in the life of the blessed Trinity in the most genuine and realistic way. The Orthodox Christian life is about becoming divine in union with God.

What is "Filioque"?

Filioque is the word that was inserted in the Western version of the Nicene Creed to assert the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son as well as from the Father. This was an innovation in the Western Church and done without an Ecumenical Council. It was one of the central issues in the Great Schism of 1054. It is still a difference in doctrine between the East and the West.

Why is this change so significant? It is precisely because it changes the nature of God. It upsets the balance of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. If the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son then it puts the Son in a superior position to the Holy Spirit. Traditional thought about the Trinity is that for any given trait, it must be either common to all Persons of the Trinity or unique to one of them. Thus, Fatherhood is unique to the Father, while begottenness is unique to the Son, and procession unique to the Spirit. Godhood, however, is common to all, as is eternality, uncreatedness, and so forth. Positing that something can be shared by two Persons (i.e., being the source of the Spirit's procession), but not the other, is to elevate those two Persons at the expense of the other. Thus, the balance of unity and diversity is destroyed. Many view that this change undermines the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Thus, with the role Spirit being denigrated, his traditional ministries are effaced or replaced. The Church's unity becomes dependent on an office, spirituality becomes adherence to the letter of the law rather than its spirit, sacraments come to be understood in terms of validity, and a spirit of legalism prevails. This is the orientation that did develop in the Western church.



REVIEW

How do we know God?

What is the difference between his essence and energies? Why is this distinction important?

What is meant by apophatic theology?

What are our sources for knowing God?

What to we need to be cautious about.

What is the uncreated Light?

What is the doctrine of the Holy Trinity?

What are the roles of the three persons?

Why do we have such a doctrine?

How can it be useful to us?

What is the "Filioque" and what is its significance?

How Was The World Created?

Our spiritual potential cannot be actualized unless the way in which we represent to ourselves the physical universe and man's place in it accords with things as they are in reality… There must be a correlation between the the way in which God actually creates and sustains the world and the way in which we ourselves conceive it, if we are to realize the relationship with and participation in the divine that is also the reality of our own most innermost being. Oskar Molisz

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How are we to Interpret Genesis?

How are to interpret what is meant by six days?

How was the World Created?

What was the process of Creation? Was it made out of something? Did it happen all at once?

What is the Nature of the World?

Is evil inherent in the world?

How was Man Created?

What is meant by being created in the "likeness" of God?

What was the purpose of man's creation?

What is the nature of the Soul and how was it created?

Do we have an immortal soul?

What is the difference between our natural condition and our present condition?

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.... God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.
(Gen 1:1,1:31)

God has revealed to us just a glimpse of the process of His creation in the book of *Genesis*. So, how are we to interpret *Genesis*? Since the acts of creation are beyond our understanding, we must interpret what is written in *Genesis* as a spiritual description about events that took place before there was time.

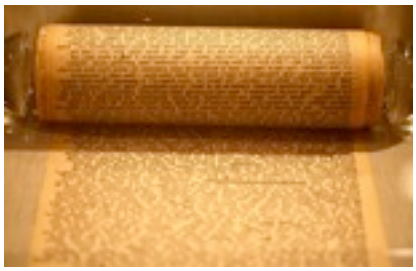
What do we know about the process of creation? God is the Creator who created out of nothing. We know that the creation was a sequential process, that the creation was Good, and that it is not an eternal creation but will come to an end. We now have lots of information about the universe from scientific exploration. It is so vast that we readily accept that our total knowledge about creation is very limited.

How about mankind, how were humans created? From *Genesis* we know that man was created as the highest of God's creation and created in God's image and likeness. God created man and women who were intended to live together in Paradise.

How about our soul? How was it created and what is its nature? God gave us an immortal soul. Its natural state is to control the body so it can act in union with the will of God.

What about the purpose of our earthly life? Created in God's likeness we are destined to become like God. We were created to be in communion with God or theosis. God created us out of his love and we are intended to live with Him eternally in Paradise

Book of Genesis



According to tradition, the Torah was translated into Greek (the Septuagint, or 70, from the traditional number of translators) in the 3rd century BC. The oldest Greek manuscripts include 2nd century BC fragments of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and 1st century BC fragments of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and the Minor Prophets. Relatively complete manuscripts of the LXX (i.e., the Septuagint) include the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus of the 4th century and the Codex Alexandrinus of the 5th century - these are the oldest surviving nearly-complete manuscripts of the Old Testament in any language. There are minor variations between the Greek and Hebrew texts, and between the three oldest Greek texts.

Although the text of Genesis makes no claim about authorship, the traditional Jewish, and later Christian, belief was that the five books of the Torah were dictated by God to Moses on Mount Sinai.

How are we to Interpret *Genesis*?

How are we as Orthodox Christians to interpret *Genesis*? First, we must respect the Text and recognize that it contains the Truth. We cannot discount what it says or relegate it to an ancient outdated myth. We believe that all Scripture is given to us through Divine inspiration. Because it is a spiritual text, we must resist making our own interpretations and seek help from those who have greater wisdom that ourselves.

There are many who insist on a strict literal interpretation of *Genesis* and believe that the seven days of Creation are the same as our current measure of seven twenty-four hour days. But we must remember that creation took place out of nothing and before time existed. Therefore, the idea of a "day" in *Genesis* cannot be the same as we know it today. Orthodox consider Genesis literally in the sense that God did Create the heavens and earth. But we don't believe Genesis gives us full knowledge about how God created. how he created.

Fortunately, our Church Fathers have written extensively on this subject to guide us (see sidebar on next page). We must begin our understanding of the Creation story in *Genesis* by studying what they have written. *Genesis* is not a scientific journal article, but is about the spiritual nature of God who is the Creator and the proper relationship of Mankind with Him. The main point is that it is God who created all that we know including humankind.

The Church Fathers were not scientist but were theologians. They had little scientific knowledge when compared to what is generally known today, yet they embraced what was known at that time about the physical world, and encouraged Christians to explore the natural world. It was a way to know God through his Creation. They felt such exploration can lead us to know God by appreciating its awesome beauty and wonder. Orthodoxy has not been involved in arguments that pit science against Religion. They accepted that science can never give us the whole truth, because it it limited to a study of the physical realm.

The Holy Fathers were steeped in wisdom about the spiritual realm. As theologians, they had a direct experience with God. They prayed and meditated for long periods each day. They were actively engaged in the sacramental life of the Church. They knew the Scriptures. They had a deep personal relationships with God. We must seek out their wisdom accepting their limited scientific knowledge and remain humble in making our own interpretations about Biblical texts.

Religion and science use different methods. Science uses the physical world to search for an understanding of how things work. But religion is based on faith which is based on our trust and belief in God. Truth comes from a relationship one has with God. A scientific approach is limited because its tools and methods are limited to the study of the physical attributes. We must not look to a spiritual document like the Bible to tell us about the mechanics of the physical

Church Fathers

Here is a list of some of their writings that we can use to help us understand the meaning of Genesis.

Saint John Chrysostom
(347 - 407)
Homilies on Genesis
On the Creation of Life

Saint Ephraim the Syrian
(306 - 373)
Interpretation of the Books of the Bible

Saint Basil the Great
(330 -379)
Hexaemeron (Six Days)
On the Origin of Man

Saint Ambrose of Milan
(340 - 397)
Hexaemeron

Saint Gregory of Nyssa
(335 - 394)
On the Making of Man

Saint John of Damascas
(676 - 749)
On the Orthodox Faith

Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949 - 1022)
The Sin of Adam

realm. We would not have the wonders of modern medicine and the advancement in living conditions if we did. There is a place for science as there is one for the study of spiritual matters. They are two simply different approaches. There can be no conflict between what is revealed to us thorough a scientific exploration of God's creation and the Truth of His revealed Word in the Scriptures. We should not mix them.

There are three kinds of knowledge. There is natural knowledge that comes from our senses. This is the knowledge of science. There is spiritual knowledge that comes from the spirit of immaterial realities. And then there is supra-spiritual knowledge which is based on direct divine revelations to the soul. The knowledge presented in Genesis is supra-spiritual knowledge. It is the result of a direct revelation from God through Moses.

We have to be humble and accept that the story of Creation is something that is beyond our total comprehension. It can never be fully explained to us creatures. We are the created and are therefore forever limited in what we can know about the nature of the Creator and his powers and methods. Saint John Chrysostom writes,

> With great gratitude let us accept what is related (by Moses), not stepping out of our own limitations, and not testing what is above us as the enemies of truth did when, wishing to comprehend everything with their minds, they did not realize that Human nature cannot comprehend the creation of God.

We must accept that the process of Creation is series of miracles. The six days of creation also produced the laws of nature. The six days are miracles which are not confined to the natural laws which can be seen as the hand of God governing the world which we now observe.

Ask yourself, before the creation of this physical world, what was it like? The answer is simply that we don't know. It is beyond the reach of science. It is a mystery. *Genesis* gives us some important supra-spiritual knowledge about Creation for the benefit of our salvation. It emphasizes our need to honor and recognize God as our Creator. It also tells us about the vocation of humankind, our purpose and our task.

Genesis is a very important Book for Orthodox Theology.

Creation Proclaims its Maker

Creation openly proclaims its Maker... We see the harmony of the universe, of the heavens and the terrestrial marvels. We see how the elements which are opposed to one another by nature are all woven together towards the same purpose by some inexplicable association, each one contributing its own power for the permanence of the whole. Things which cannot be mixed or joined together according to their proper qualities nevertheless do not separate from one another, nor are the destroyed in one another by a confusion of their opposite qualities. Those whose nature tends upward are carried downward, as the warmth of the sun streams down its rays. Heavy bodies are lightened and rarified in vapors, as when water contrary to its own nature moves upward, carried through the air by winds... The moisture of rain poured out on earth, although it is one in nature, begets a multitude of different plants, producing appropriate growth in all that exists... When we see all these with intellectual eye of the soul, are we not taught plainly from our observations ha as divine Power fits the parts together with the whole and fulfills the whole in the parts?

Saint Gregory of Nyssa

How Was the World Created?

The Cappadocian Church Fathers teach that God first creates the world and beautifies it like a palace, and then leads humanity into it. The genesis of the cosmos, is a mystery (mysterion) for the human mind, a genesis produced by the Word of God. As such, the world is a revelation of God (Rom. 1:19-20). Thus, when its intelligent inhabitants see it as cosmos, they come to learn about the Divine wisdom and the Divine energies. The cosmos is a coherent whole, a created synthesis, because all its elements are united and interrelated in time and space. A serious study of the mystery of creation, through faith, prayer, meditation and science, can help one see and appreciate the the integrity of creation.

St. Basil the Great said, "We should understand in the creation the original cause of the Father as a founding cause, the cause of the Son as a creative, and the cause of the Spirit as an implementing one." Thus the Father is the "*Creator of all things*", the Son is the one *"through whom all things were made",* and the Holy Spirit is the one *"in whom are all things". "Everything that He (God the Creator) had made ...was very good"* (Gen. 1:31), because "first He conceived, and His conception was a work carried out by His Word, and perfectly by His Spirit."

Creation is the action of the Son bringing God the Father's desire into existence and the Holy Spirit perfecting it in goodness and beauty; the one calling the creation and leading it to the Father, and the other helping the creation to respond to His call and communicating perfection to it. Thus, the creation is the result of the close relationship and cooperation of the Holy Trinity. The community of three Persons participates actively in the execution of the whole of God's plan.

The created world is distinct in essence from God. The world was brought into being out of non-being and not created out of an eternally existing material. *Beholding the heavens and the earth, and seeing all that is there, you will understand that God has created it all from nothing* (2 Macc. 7:28). As St. Gregory of Nyssa affirms, "It begins to be, and the very substance of the creation owes its beginning to change". This transition from non-existence is a change brought about by God's creative Word *"who has established the world so that it shall not be moved"* (Ps. 93:1).

The world did not form itself, but is dependent on the will of God. The world is a production of God's free will, goodness, wisdom, love and omnipotence. God did not create out of necessity. God created

Seven Days of Creation

First day: God creates light. (The source of light is not mentioned; it is described by some as a "primordial light".) The light is divided from the darkness, and "day" and "night" are named.

Second day: God creates a firmament and divides the waters above it from the waters below. The firmament is named "heaven".

Third day: God gathers the waters together, and dry land appears. "Earth" and "sea" are named. Then God brings forth grass, herbs and fruit-bearing trees on the Earth.

Fourth day: God creates lights in the firmament of Heaven, to separate light from darkness and to mark days, seasons and years. Two great lights are made (note: they are not named), as well as the stars.

Fifth day: God creates birds and sea creatures, including "great sea serpents" or "great whales". They are commanded to be fruitful and multiply.

Sixth day: God creates wild beasts, livestock and reptiles upon the Earth. He then creates Man and Woman in His "image" and "likeness". They are told to "be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it." Humans and animals are given plants to eat. The totality of creation is described by God as "very good".

Seventh day: God finishes his work of creation, and rests from His work. He blesses and sanctifies the seventh day.

so that other beings, glorifying Him, might be participants in His goodness.

The account of Creation in *Genesis* clearly shows us that the world does not exist eternally, but has appeared in time. Further, it did not appear in a single instant, but was created in sequence.

Saint Gregory the Theologian says:

> "There is a certain firstness, secondness, thirdness, and so on to the seventh day of rest from works, and by these days is divided all that is created, being brought into order by unutterable laws, but not produced in an instant, by the Almighty Word, for Whom to think or to speak means already to perform the deed. If man appeared in the world last, honored by the handiwork and image of God, this is not in the least surprising; since for him , as for a king, the royal dwelling had to be prepared and only then was the king to be led in, accompanied by all creatures."

> "The world was not conceived by chance and without reason, but for an useful end and for the great advantage of all beings, it is really the school where reasonable souls exercise themselves, the training ground where they learn to know God; by sight of visible and sensible things the mind is led, as by a hand, to the contemplation of invisible things."

Saint Gregory of Nyssa writes,

> "Scripture shows the vital forces blended with the world of matter according to a gradation: first, it infused itself into insensate nature; then advanced into the sentient world; then ascended to intelligent and rational beings.... The creation of man is related to coming last, who took up into himself every single form of life, both that of plants and that which is seen in animals. ...what is perfect comes last, according to a certain necessary sequence in the order of things...
> Thus we may suppose that nature makes an ascent as it were by steps--I mean the various properties of life--from the lower to the perfect form."

Saint Gregory of Nyssa

He was a younger brother of Basil the Great, and a good friend of Gregory Nazianzus.

He become bishop of Nyssa in 372. Was present at the Second Ecumenical Council where he was a defender of the Nicene Creed.

Gregory described the ideal of human perfection as constant progress in virtue and godliness. In his theology, God himself has always been perfect and has never changed, and never will. Humanity fell from grace in the Garden of Eden, but rather than return to an unchanging state, humanity's goal is to become more and more perfect, more like God, even though humanity will never understand, much less attain, God's transcendence. This idea has had a profound influence on the Eastern Orthodox teaching regarding theosis or "divinization".

How was Man Created?

Man is the highest creation of God on earth.

> God said, "*Let us make man in Our image, after our likeness; and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air... and over all the earth... So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him.*" (Gen. 1:26-27)

Adam and Eve were created by God after all the other created beings and in a different way. They were created by the direct involvement and action of God from elements already created. This indicates not only the outstanding position of the human being in the whole of the creation, but also a special relationship to God. Only the human being combines both material and spiritual elements.

Man was a distinct creation having a higher purpose than the rest of creation. We are called to exercise dominion over all creatures on earth (cf. Gen. 1:28), i.e. to be stewards (oikonomoi) of God's material world, caring for it, maintaining it in its integrity and perfecting it by opening it up to God through our own deification.

Presence of God's image in man testifies to a reflection of the very attributes of God in man's spiritual nature. God formed man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Gen 2:7). Body and soul were formed at the same time.

Saint Theodorete:

> *God created all other creatures with His word but Man He created with His own hands... Showing the greater care God had for man than other creatures.*

Saint Basil the Great:

> *If you consider nature alone, man is nothing and has no value; but if you regard the honor with which he has been created, man is something great...*

Saint Gregory the Theologian

He is also known as Gregory of Nazianzus. He was born in 329 in Arianzus, a village of the second district of Cappadocia, not far from Nazianzus.

After their studies at Athens, Gregory became Basil's fellow ascetic, living the monastic life together with him for a time in the hermitages of Pontus. His father ordained him presbyter of the Church of Nazianzus, and St. Basil consecrated him Bishop of Sasima. He was elected Archbishop of Constantinople by the Second Ecumenical Council, which assembled there in 381.

He wrote both prose and poems in every type of meter. Because of the beauty of his writings, he is considered to have surpassed the Greek writers of antiquity, and because of his God-inspired theological thought, he received the surname "Theologian."

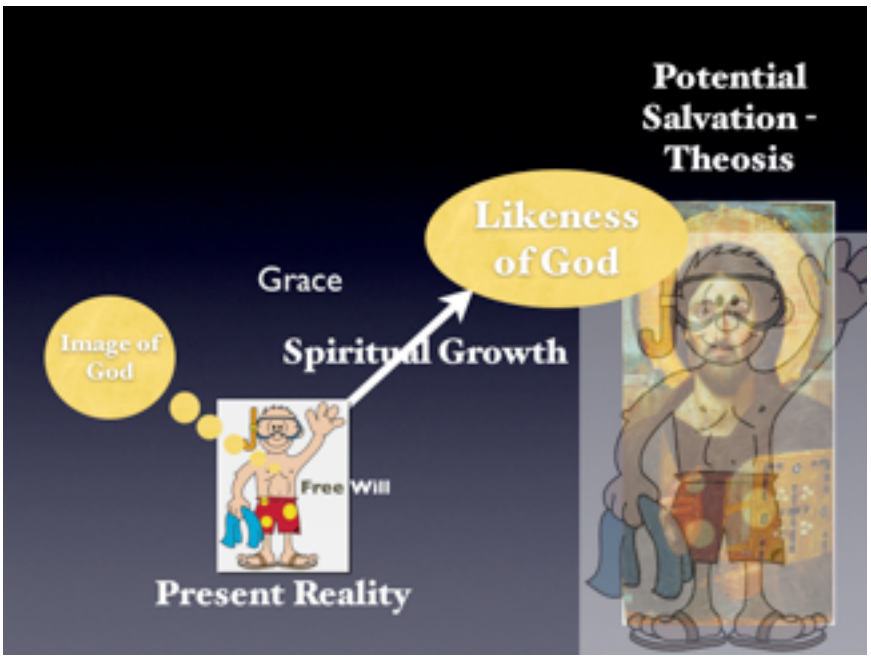
Man is created in the image and likeness of God

The presence of God's image in man testifies to a reflection of the very attributes of God in man's spiritual nature. The first man was not deified at the time of his creation, but he was created for deification. Man was a distinct creation with a higher purpose on earth that the rest of creation. He was made to "live in Him," to "glorify Him," to perfect himself in "His likeness," and to be the chief "priest of all earthly creation."

Saint Gregory of Nyssa:

> *This is the same as to say He made human nature participant in all good; for in the Deity is the fulness of good, and this is His image, then the image finds its resemblance to the Archetype in being fulfilled with all good.*

Most of our Church Fathers teach that there is a difference between the image of God and His likeness. The image is the very nature of the soul. The likeness comes from the moral perfecting of humankind in virtue and sanctity as he acquires the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We receive the image of God with our existence. But, we must acquire the likeness given this possibility from God. For us to become in the likeness of God depends on our free will.



We can grow to become like God. This is our purpose. To become morally perfected in virtue and sanctity through the acquirement of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. God wants us to glorify Him and to be

Sacramental Life

God's life is infused into the physical world and mingled with it, without change or confusion. It is through the mysteries or the sacraments of the Church that we are prepared for our future life in Paradise. God touches, purifies, illumines, sanctifies and deifies human life in his uncreated divine energies through the these mysteries. As the Church is the perpetual extension of Christ, so the mysteries are the power by which the Church sanctifies people.

The mysteries, while physical in their outward expression, are not mere symbolic rites. The outward signs of the mysteries convey grace tangibly, not of themselves, but by the very presence of the Holy Spirit in them.

It is important to emphasize the human factor as well, since salvation is accomplished by God in cooperation (synergy) with humanity. The holy mysteries are neither magic nor mechanical operations. Each Christian life, sharing in the power of the holy mysteries, itself becomes a sacrament.

In recent centuries, the Orthodox Church has recognized seven mysteries for sacraments: baptism; chrismation; the eucharist; penance; the priesthood; marriage; and the anointing of the sick (Euche-

faithful in our union with Him. We have innate within us a striving to move towards Him, to acknowledge Him as the Creator, to glorify Him, finally to rejoice in union with Him. We are called to perfect ourselves and to guard our likeness with God and restore it.

God also made us as his chief priests and to offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God on the behalf of all those born on earth. We are to unite all of creation with God and thus keep the whole chain of earthly creatures in a harmonious bond and order.

A man may know the number of the stars in the heavens, and the names of all the fish in the sea... A man may know all the thoughts of men and fortell their destinies and reveal every mystery that the earth holds in its inner recesses... If he has not the fear of God his knowledge is of as much use as a water in a sieve.

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic

Outer Space

Images From the Hubble Telescope

Do You Know Your Soul?

The soul is a substance that is distinct from the body yet totally integrated with it. It is totally different than anything material. Paul tells us, *What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt 16:26) Also, Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul* (Matt 10:28).

The word soul (ψυχή *psychē*) in Greek means life or vital breath, so we might think of it as the breath of God that God breathed into man when he was made and given life. Saint Gregory the Theologian says that the soul is the breath of God, and while being heavenly, it endures being mixed with what is of the dust. It is mixed like the yeast is with flour to form bread. At death the body and soul temporally separate, but this is not a separation forever. At the General Resurrection we will arise in a new renewed form uniting body and soul.

Basically, how the soul originates in an individual is not known, but remains a mystery. We do know that it does not preexist as in the philosophy of Plato, a view the Church has rejected.

Soul is immortal

The soul is immortal and this is one of the most fundamental aspects of our Christian faith. This view predated the New testament times. *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God Who gave it.* (Eccl. 12:7) Jesus often pointed to the immortality of the soul as the foundation of a pious life. He condemned the Saducces, who denied the immorality of the soul.
Paul teaches,

> *For me ...to die is gain...having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ* (Phil 1:21,23). *For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven* (II Cor 5:1-2).

Soul is meant to govern the body

From the early Church Fathers we learn that it is characteristic of the soul to govern the strivings of the body, and characteristic of the body to accept this governance. The apostle Paul said that the *"body wars against"* the soul, and that *"I buffet my body"*, to keep it under control. It is like the body is the tool of an artist and that artist is the soul. It is not a natural condition for the soul to be subject to the impulses of the body. The soul is capable of entering into warfare with the strivings of the body as if it is something foreign to it and hostile to it and able to gain victory over it. Our present condition is a difficult and unnatural one as the body is in control of the soul and the soul is separated from God as illustrated on the left in the diagram below. This is far different from the natural condition shown on the right where the Soul is in harmony with God and directs the body.

Review

What is the relationship of science and religion?

How do you go about interpreting the Bible?

Who created the Universe? Why?

How was the Trinity involved?

How was Man created?

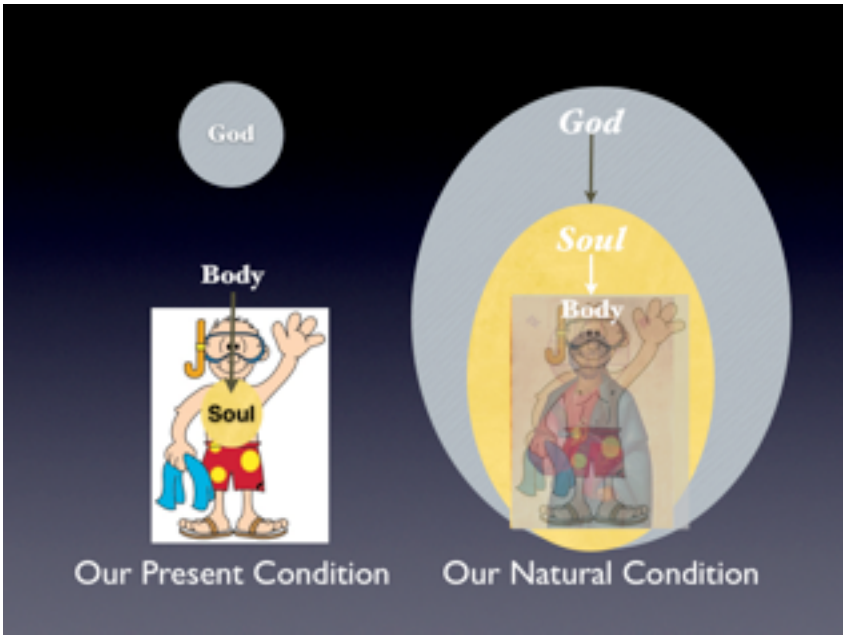
What is the significance of Man's creation?

What is the nature of our soul?

What is man's purpose?

What is our task?

How do we accomplish it?



Our major challenge and responsibility as humans is to ask God to help our soul regain its control over the bodily demands (passions). The sacraments of the Church help us in this task. This task requires God's grace. Of course we must first recognize this condition and have sufficient humbleness to ask for God's help and forgiveness.

In *Genesis* we learned that man was created in the likeness and image of God. Scripture only says that man was created "*in the image of God*" but does not tell us what part manifests this image. Some see it as reason, others as free will, and others immortality. It may well be all of these. But since we know that God is not clothed by a kind of body like our flesh and bones, this image of necessity resides in the our soul.

What is the Fall of Mankind?

The first man, by disobedience gained his expulsion from Paradise. Not as if any evil existed in the tree of knowledge, but from the fact of his disobedience did man draw, as from a fountain, labor, grief, and, at last, fell prey to death.

St. Theophilos of Antioch

What was life like in Paradise?

What was the role of the Snake?

What is sin?

How did man fall?

What was the sin of Adam?

What were the consequences of the fall?

What is meant by Original Sin in the West? How does it differ from the Orthodox view?

What is life in Paradise like?

The first humans were Adam and Eve. God put them in the Garden of Eden or Paradise and it was their duty to *"till and keep it."* It was a most beautiful place with *"every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food."* In the middle of this garden was the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told Adam, *"You May freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you do you will die."* They lived without clothes as there were no bodily passions as they were totally focused on God. Man was created in the image and likeness of God and was given dominion over the fish of the seas, the birds of the air and over every creeping thing on earth and all the earth.

Saint John Chrysostom writes,

> Man lived on earth like an angel; he was in the body, but he had no bodily needs; like a king, adorned with purple and a diadem and clothed in royal garb, he took delight in the dwelling of Paradise, having an abundance in everything.... Before the fall men lived in Paradise like angels; they were not inflamed with lust, were not kindled by other passions either, were not burdened with bodily needs; but being created entirely incorruptible and immortal, they did not even need the covering of clothing.
>
> Homilies on Genesis 13:4, 15:4

The Garden of Eden was a special place made for man alone, the kingdom of Heaven where man lived in communion with God. He was not deified, but was created for deification. He was free from bodily needs. He had no fear of death and felt no suffering. There were no passions and he had responsibilities and a challenge.

Lucifer - The Devil

Tradition tells us, that the devil, who is also called "Satan" or "the enemy," was created as a mighty and beautiful archangel, one of the most perfect and radiant, and for this reason he was given the name Lucifer, "the light-bearer". But when he chose to disobey the will of God, he fell and left his dwelling in heaven. Lucifer had been richly endowed by the Creator and should have ever held his eyes on the Lord, but instead he concentrated his attention on his own perfection, fell in love with it and was seized with pride. He forgot that he owed all to God, that all his perfections were the gift of God. He was so blinded by the idea of his own greatness and considered, "is there any who is equal to me? Any angel ... or God, even God Himself. I myself am divine, I myself am a divinity!" Satan rose against his Lord and took with him a large number of spirits who accepted his authority. The Archangel Michael took command of the angels who remained faithful to God, forming an army of angels, and entered into conflict with the fallen spirits. Long before the creation of the material world took place this war which was waged between the angels of light and the spirits of darkness. But light conquered darkness, and the rebels were hurled into the abyss.

Paradise is an image of the age to come, the everlasting day, a future that has no cycles of seasons, years, months, nor minutes of days. Paradise is one glorious day without routine work or sleep. This is where we are destined to return if we have faith and follow the way of Christ.

What went wrong in Paradise?

Adam and Eve were happily engaged in their life in Paradise when a snake came to Eve.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Has God indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden"? And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. (Gen 3: 1-6)

See how cunning the snake is here? He tells no lies but twists the truth to mislead Eve. He tempted Her. He tricked her.

This is how sin and evil enters into the picture. Being made in the image and likeness of God Adam and Eve both had a free will. They could choose to stay faithful to God and be His servant. Here we see both of them choosing to turn away from a trusting relationship with God. They ignore His directions, thereby separating themselves from Him and instead relying on their own will.. This is the nature of sin - to separate from God, become self-centered and to act based on our own will without regard for God.

What where the consequences of their sin?

One of the first results was that they became ashamed that they were naked and they covered themselves with fig leaves. They were no longer in contemplation of God, but were now self-centered in their bodies. Their soul was no longer in communion with God, their bodily desires (passions) took charge, and they became ashamed (self- centered) because of their lack of clothing. They began the passionate earthly life that we all now participate in.

What were they to do now that they were separated from God?

> *And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?*

How Saint Paul Experiences Sin

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.
For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.
Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.
I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.
For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.
But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (Rom 7:18 -23)

We know they were separated from God because He had to call to them. "Where are you," He called. God knew where they were, but that they were separated from Him and no longer in communion with Him. God was calling to bring them back into relationship with Him, for them to repent, to acknowledge their poor choice, and ask for forgiveness. Having lost the contemplation of God, now separated from Him, and being more interested in their naked bodies, could they respond properly? What did they do?

Adam says:

> *"I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."*
> *"The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."*

Eve says:

> *"The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the snake. Neither of them accepted responsibility for the bad choice they had made. They respond with self-justification. They showed no humility in the face of God. Being separated from God, they were now destined to suffer the consequences of eating of the tree of knowledge that God had described to Adam earlier. They now knew evil and were blinded by it.

It was through their sin that death entered into the world. We hear this repeated by Saint Paul several times. Paul says:
As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. (Rom 5:12)
The wages of sin is death. (Rom 6:23)

What was the sin? It was pride. They thought they could become like God. They acted out of their own self interest separate from God.

> *Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.* (Gen 3:22-24)

They no longer had access to the tree of life, which is eternal life. Now instead of eternal life in union with God, Adam and Eve found themselves separated from God because of their pride.

What are the consequences of this first sin?

Man still had the image of God, but it was now "tarnished" or "dimmed." Their bodies became grossly material and became subject to sickness, corruption and death. The Garden with the tree of life was no longer open for them. This is the condition we inherit from Adam and Eve. This is what we call "ancestral sin." We do not inherit the

Saint John of Damascus

Some have imagined Paradise to have been material, while others have imagined it to have been spiritual. However, it seems to me that , just as man was created both sensitive and intellectual, so did this most sacred domain of his have the twofold aspect of being perceptible both to the senses and to the mind. For, while in his body he dwelt in this most sacred and superbly beautiful place. There he had the indwelling God as a dwelling place and wore Him as a glorious garment. He was wrapped about with His grace, and, like some one of the angels, he rejoiced in the enjoyment of that one most sweet fruit which is the contemplation of God, and by this he was nourished. Now, this is indeed what is fittingly called the tree of life, for the sweetness of Divine contemplation communicates a life uninterrupted by death to them that partake of it.

guilt for the bad choice that Adam made, but we inherit the consequence of his sinfulness, the change in nature he experienced, his body becoming subject to death and corruption. Since we are all descendants of Adam and Eve we all inherit their changed nature that resulted from the fall. Death is the major power of the devil which Christ cam to free us from.

What is evil?

Remember, all that God created was good. The cause of evil was in the actions of Adam and Eve that separated them from God. This is what sin is, a separation from God. It is man who creates this separation, not God. Evil in the world is a consequence of falling out of union with God, turning to rely only on our own will instead of the will of God. God did not create evil. Evil is the result of man's misguided usage of free will.

How could man fall into this sin of pride?

Our Creator created man in His image and gave man three great gifts at his creation: freedom, reason, and love. These are all essential for his spiritual growth. But along with freedom goes the possibility of making the wrong choices and being subject to temptation. Being tempted for *reason* is to become proud in mind, and then seeking the knowledge of good and evil outside of God. This is like making oneself a "god." The temptation of *love* in place of love of God and one's neighbor is to love oneself and everything that satisfies bodily desires. If we are to love God with all our heart, we must be able to freely choose to do so. For forced love is not really love. God's plan was for man to become like God so this possibility was part of man's creation.

How about misfortune?

Misfortunes such as storms or accidents are not in themselves evil or good. We must have reverence for the natural order of the world. We may not understand all its workings, but we are part of a larger interrelated system. Endlessly, the various and mutually opposed strivings of blind elemental powers and organic creatures are colliding with each other at every moment, and are brought into harmony becoming a source for continual renewal in the world.

How about our difficult sufferings?

Suffering began with the Fall. The causes of diseases and sufferings are men themselves. Consequences of moral evil spread from people to the animal world and to the whole of creation. Paul writes,

> *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now... For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected it in hope: because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*
> (Rom 8:22, 20-21)

Evil is a deviation from the original condition of Paradise. God is not the cause of moral evil. Evil comes from a separation from God and consists of the violation of God's will, the commandments of God, and

Tree of knowledge of good and evil

The holy Fathers say that the tree of knowledge of good and evil is something which is only for the mature people. The tree itself represents the knowledge of evil, since tasting of it meant disobeying the commandment of God. Adam learned about evil through his disobedience. He chose the way of sin and thereby discovered what it meant to be evil. Real evil does not come until one chooses to be evil.

Making the choice that Adam made is one that we all make as we come into adulthood. We become free to choose to do good or to make the mistake of entering into evil and the life of sin.

the moral law which is written in the human conscience. This condition is called sin. It is considered to be like a disease for which we need healing.

God never abandoned mankind. Throughout the Old Testament we can see how he tried to call them back to Himself. He took away neither His image nor the freedom of will or reason. Man could still choose to love God with all his heart and mind. But mankind now needed help to reunite with God.

The Orthodox Church teaches that we have a free will and can choose to be in a loving relationship with God or not. We cannot be responsible for what others choose, but we are accountable for our own choices. Adam and Eve sinned and the consequence was a change in their nature where they became subject to death and corruption. They were denied entrance to Paradise and the tree of life. Separated from God, they became blind as to His plan for them. This changed nature was then passed on from generation to generation down to all mankind. As a result of this fallen condition mankind needed to be saved, to be freed from the shackle of death and to be shown the way back to Paradise for eternal life in union with God. This is the role of the Church to help us overcome the power death has on us.

What is "original sin"?

What is the difference in views between Orthodoxy and the western churches?

Original sin (προπατορική αμρτία in Greek means ancestral sin) is a term used in western churches that is different from what the Church originally taught as ancestral sin. It is a doctrine that comes from the time of Saint Augustine. He was defending the Church against the teaching of Pelagius. Augustine taught that all humanity sinned with Adam. That is, his sin became our personal sin. The consequence is that guilt replaces death as the ancestral inheritance.

It is pointed out that Augustine used a poor translation of Romans 5:12. eph ho (επη'ηο) which means because of was translated as in whom. Sinned in Adam is quite different than sinned because of Adam. The correct interpretation teaches that Adam's sin carried death to all creation, and that although our sin is evidence to this death, it is not Adam's specific transgression that we have inherited.

In the Orthodox teaching we are subject to sinful tendencies, sickness, suffering and death as the result of our descendence from Adam. With Adam's sin our nature was changed being now subject to suffering and death. Our goal now is to overcome these fallen tendencies with the help of the Holy Spirit and the way of Christ so we can gain union with God, overcome self-centered tendencies that result from fear of death, and live in harmony with him in Paradise.

In the Orthodox view, guilt can only result from an act which one has committed. We can't sin for another person. Therefore we cannot be guilty of the sin of Adam. We believe that we need a savior to over-

Review

What is sin?

What is evil?

What was the sin of Adam and Eve?

Who is responsible for evil in the world?

What are the consequences of the sin of Adam and Eve?

Why are we in need of salvation?

Explain the difference between the Orthodox view and the western view on "original sin."

Based on what you read in this Chapter, what do you need to do to be saved?

come death and our separation from God that is a consequence of Adam's sin, to be forgiven our own transgressions that, but there is no need to be forgiven for Adam's transgression. For Adam, sin came first then death. We inherit death from Adam and our sin follows.

Death is a significant burden for us to carry. Our lives are dominated by the fear of death and our struggle to survive. In this struggle we tend to become self-centered. As a result we commonly find ourselves separated from God. Our salvation involves a transformation from this fearful autonomous state. For eternal life we must be in communion with God and one another.

Augustine in his debate with Pelagius developed the position that only grace is able to save. The Church had always taught that it was both a matter of grace and personal effort or *synergia* as it was termed. This position of the early Church was abandoned in the west. A concept of legalistic justice was then applied to western theology which led to further differences between east and west and the notion of a wrathful God seeking justice from man for the sin of Adam rather than the loving God of Orthodoxy who seeks and provides for our healing in the Church.

How Are We Saved?

God our Saviour wants all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Grace does not compel anyone. Men have the God-given freedom to accept it and to work with it or to reject it. Those who embrace it are saved and those who withdraw from it are lost. Elder Cleopa of Romania

How did God prepare us for our salvation?

How did our salvation Begin?

Why Did God Send His Son?

What is the difference between the General Salvation and our Personal Salvation?

What is meant when we say Christ conquered Death?

How did Christ establish the Church for our benefit?

What are the conditions for our personal salvation?

Our salvation is about acquiring eternal life in union with God in the Kingdom of Heaven. Scripture tells us that *"nothing unclean can enter the Kingdom of God* (Eph 5:5; Rev 21:27). God is light, and those who enter into the Kingdom of God must also be sons of light. Therefore the entry into the Kingdom requires the purity of soul and a garment of *"holiness without which no man shall see the Lord* (Heb 12:14). We are destined to become holy people of God.

Paul says, *Ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God* (Eph 2:8). In his letter to the Philippians he also writes, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* (Phil 2:12) Salvation involves both faith and works.

The Son of God came into the world to accomplish two things. First, to open the path to Paradise for the possibility of the personal salvation of each of us. He did this by his victory over death. Second, He came to direct the hearts of all people to search and thirst for the Kingdom of God and give them help and power on their path to salvation. He did this through the establishment of His Chruch on earth and sending to us the Holy Spirit.

In Orthodox theology, redemption is not seen in judicial terms, where one is redeemed from the wrath of God as a result of the Fall and granted justification. Redemption is instead where one is called to participate in the divine energies of God as a result of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and be healed of the woundedness we have as a consequence of the Fall. . It is a gracious and divine gift which is bestowed by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the Church, granting all faithful, a personal experience of Christ who in turn leads us to God, His Father.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria wrote, "*The Son of God became man, that we might become [like] God."*

Moses

Moses was born to a Hebrew mother who hid him when a Pharaoh ordered all newborn Hebrew boys to be killed, and ended up being adopted into the Egyptian royal family. After killing an Egyptian slave master, he fled and became a shepherd, and was later commanded by God to deliver the Hebrews from slavery. After the Ten Plagues were unleashed upon Egypt, he led the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and in the desert for 40 years. God reveled to him the Law on Mount Sinai. Despite living to 120, he did not enter the Land of Israel, as he disobeyed God when God instructed him on how to bring forth water from a rock in the desert.

Before his death he prophesied the coming of Christ.

How did God prepare us for our salvation?

Our Salvation was Foreordained

After the Fall, man had to be saved from His separation from God the the influence the fear of death has on our way of life. He needed to freed from this fear and find his way back to the Kingdom of God.

Why did God want to save mankind? God had no necessity to save mankind. It is because God made man out of His Love. He has endless mercy towards all of mankind. God in the foreknowledge of the fall of man, foreordained our salvation, even before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). He knew we would fall and that this was part of a large plan to bring man in union with Him in true love as He loves His creation. In Scripture the Savior is called the Lamb of God and was foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20). The Lord never abandoned us. The moment of man's fall into sin, He continually led us toward our salvation.

The Lord chose from the descendants of Noah, who had been saved from the Flood, a single race for the preservation of piety and faith in the one true God. (Race of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the whole Hebrew people). He led them out of slavery in Egypt. He made a covenant with them. He sent them Judges and Prophets, warned them and chastised them and led them out of Babylonian captivity. He also prepared a very special person to become the Mother of the Son of God.

There were the Prophesies.

Moses proclaimed, *The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.* (Deut. 18:15)

The words of Jesus himself echo this prophecy, *For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.* (John 5:46)

Psalm 21 was recognized by ancient rabbis as a hymn of the Messiah. (See also Psalms 39,68, 108, 40, 15, 8)

Prophet Isaiah prophesied:

Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed for He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to

Isaiah

The Holy Prophet Isaiah lived 700 years before the birth of Christ. Isaiah was called to prophetic service during the reign of Oziah [Uzziah], king of Judea, and he prophesied for 60 years during the reign of kings Joatham, Achaz [Ahaz], Hezekiah, and Manasseh.

The prophet foretold the birth of the Christ from a Virgin, and with particular clarity he describes the Suffering of Christ for the sins of the world. He foresaw His Resurrection and the universal spreading of His Church. By his clear foretelling of Christ the Saviour, the Prophet Isaiah deserves to be called an Old Testament Evangelist. To him belong the words, "He bears our sins and is smitten for us.... He was wounded for our sins and tortured for our transgressions. The chastisement of our world was upon Him, and by His wounds we were healed...." (Is 53:4-5).

his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken... And He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Is 53:1-8, 12)

By the time of Christ, the coming of the Messiah was anticipated. We can see this from the dialogue Jesus had with the Samaritan woman. *I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things* (John 4:25) Paul also affirms the expectation. *When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son* (Gal 4:4)

God prepared the right conditions for the time of our Salvation. The Son of God was sent when the human race, following after Adam, had tasted in full, spiritually speaking, of the tree of knowledge and of good and evil, and had come to know in experience the sweetness of doing good and the bitterness of evil-doing; when for the most part mankind had reached an extreme degree of impiety and corruption; when the best, although smallest, part of humanity had an especially great thirst, longing, and desire to see the promised Redeemer, Reconciler, Savior, Messiah; when, finally, by God's will, the political conditions were ready because the whole of the civilized part of humanity had been united under the authority of Rome - something which strongly favored the spreading of faith and the Church of Christ. Then the promised and expected Son of God came to earth.

Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh (1 Tim 3:16)

How did our salvation begin?

Our Salvation begins with the Incarnation of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

God the Father sent His Son into the world to heal the human race and to bring the world back into union with Himself. Paul says, *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.* (2Corinthians 5:18) Saint John the Theologian writes, *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* (John 3:16) *We know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.* (1 John 5:20)

Luke records for us the story of the Son of God's conception and birth. His birth was a miracle brought about by the Holy Spirit through the virgin Mary. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, it was from Mary that Jesus took on his humanity. He became like us in all ways. Yet, He remained totally God. Paul writes, *For in Him dwells all the*

Prophesy of Daniel

While I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel... informed me, and talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand...

That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem, Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.

(Dan 9:24-27)

fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col 2:9). Through His incarnation God became like us, uniting humanity with His divinity.

These two natures are important because Jesus revealed to us God in a way different than any prophet. Through His presence on earth we can gain mystical knowledge about the Holy Trinity and learn how we, in our humanity, can become like Him and live in communion with God. Christ united human nature with divine nature showing us how all of us can share in the life and glory of God. His sinless way of life, His uniting of human will with God's will, opens the way for us to live life as God intended for us, in union with Him.

Saint Basil put it very clearly when he wrote,

> *Thou didst not turn Thyself away forever from Thy creature, whom Thou has made, O good One, nor didst thou forget the work of Thy hands. Through the tender compassion of Thy mercy, Thou didst visit him in various ways; Thou didst send prophets; Thou didst perform mighty works by Thy Saints, who in every generation were well-pleasing unto Thee; Thou didst speak to us by the mouths of thy servants the prophets, foretelling us of he salvation which was to come; Thou didst appoint angels as guardians. And when the fulness of time had come, Thou didst speak to us through Thy Son, Himself, by Whom Thou didst also make the ages; Who, being the radiance of Thy glory and the image of Thy person, upholding all things by the Word of His power, thought it not robbery to be equal to Thee, the God and Father. He was God before the ages, yet He appeared on earth and lived among men, becoming incarnate of a holy Virgin. He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being likened to the body of our lowliness, that He might liken us to the image of His glory.*

The union and the two natures of Christ were affirmed in three Ecumenical Councils. (3, 4 and 6)

Why did God send His Son?

He sent His Son to open the path to Paradise and to help us in our individual struggle to gain our personal salvation, to be united with God as we were at the time of our creation.. He had to free us from the bondage of death. By voluntarily becoming man, living a sinless life, tortured, dying on the Cross, rising again, Jesus Christ opened the way for all of us to return to a union with God the Father. The Doctrine of the Salvation is the central doctrine of the Orthodox Christian Church. The Lord Jesus Christ is the redeemer and savior of the human race. He was able to defeat the devil by his victory over death destroying the greatest power of Satan, death. Christ took upon Himself the sickness of the entire world. He is the Lamb slaughtered for the salvation of the world.

Through His death and resurrection he accomplish three things. First, the forgiveness of sins. Second the freedom from the bondage

Annunciation

Luke (1:26-39).

The Archangel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary, who was living in Nazareth, and said to her, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you." Mary was perplexed and wondered what kind of greeting this was.

The angel told her not to be afraid, for she had found favor with God. He said, "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

In faith and obedience to the will of God, Mary replied to the angel, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be according to your word." Upon her response, the angel departed.

of death. With his resurrection death is no longer to be feared as the end of our existence but a passage to immortal life. We know we will face death but we now face it knowing that *neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 8:38-39) And Third,the transfiguration of the entire universe. The resurrection is the restoration of our human nature as we were created in the image and likeness of God.

God also sent His Son to establish the Church here on earth for our healing. He taught His disciples so they could tech others. He empowered them with the Holy Spirit and established the sacraments of the Church for our benefit.

What is the difference between the General Salvation and our Personal Salvation?

The Apostles teach us to distinguish between the truth of the salvation of mankind as a whole and the necessity for a personal reception and assimilation of the gift of salivation on the part of each individual, and the fact that this latter salvation depends upon each of us individually.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Eph 2:8-9)

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Phil 2:12-13)

Our personal salvation consists in the attainment of eternal life in God, in the Kingdom of Heaven. We are told through Scripture, nothing unclean can enter the Kingdom of God (Eph 5:5, Apoc 21:27). Since God is known as light and there is no darkness in Him, and those who enter the Kingdom of God must themselves be sons of the Light. Therefore the entrance into it necessarily requires purity of soul, a garment of holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

> *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.* (Heb 12:14)

The Son of God came into the world in order to do the following:

1. To free us from the shackles of death and open the path to mankind in its entirety for our individual personal salvation.
2. By this means to direct the hearts of men to the search, to the thirst for the Kingdom of God, and to give help, to give power

on this path of salvation for the acquirement of personal spiritual purity and sanctity.

The first has been accomplished by Christ entirely. The second depends on ourselves, although it is accompanied by the activity of the Grace of the Christ in the Holy Spirit.

What is meant when we say Christ conquered Death?

Before the Incarnation of Christ and His Resurrection, souls of the dead were in a condition of rejection, separated from God, in darkness, hades, Sheol. In Hades were also the souls of the Old Testament righteous ones. Our deliverance was also their deliverance. Christ after His death descended in His soul and divinity into Hades, while His body remained in the grave. He preached salvation to the captives of Hades and brought up from Hades all the Old testament righteous ones into the bright mansions of the Kingdom of Heaven.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison. (I Peter 3:18-19)

For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. (I Peter 4:6)

Now that He ascended, what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. (Eph 4:8-10)

As a result, death for righteous men became only a transition from the world below to the world above, to a better life, to life in the Light of the Kingdom of God; bodily death itself became only a temporary phenomenon, for by the Resurrection of Christ the way to the General Resurrection was opened to us.

Mother of God

Two primary dogmas of the Church. She was Ever virgin and she is the Mother of God (Theotokos). The Virgin Birth is testified to by both Matthew and Luke.

But, how about the brothers and sisters of the Lord?

In the Gospels there is named four brothers (James, Joses, Simon and Jude) and three sisters. But on the account of the journey to Jerusalem there is no mention of any kinfolk and acquaintances. Then when Mary stood at the Cross she was alone and was entrusted to His disciple John. The Evangelists speak of either half brothers or cousins by using the term bother and sister which were applied to extended family members in those days.

Mary was born subject to the sin of Adam together with all mankind and shared the need of redemption. She is seen as pure from sin as the fruit of her union with her spiritual labor and the abundance of grace that was given to her.

The coming down of the Holy Spirit totally sanctified the womb of the Virgin for the reception of the Son. Upon her death tradition holds that her body was taken up into heaven. But this is not a dogma of the Orthodox Church.

Resurrection.

Resurrection is the foundation and crown of our Orthodox faith. Just as by death our Redemption was accomplished, so by His Resurrection eternal life was given to us.

The Resurrection is the object of the Church's constant triumph, its unceasing rejoicing.

Saving fruits of the resurrection are:

1) Victory over death.

2) Blessedness and beginning of the existence of the Heavenly Church.

3) Sending down of the Holy Spirit and creation of the Church of Christ on earth.

Troparian of Holy Pascha:

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in tombs bestowing life.

How did Christ establish the Church for our benefit?

To help us as we walk the path to salvation He established the Church both here on earth and in heaven.

Beginning of the Church Triumphant

The Church Triumphant is the Church in Heaven. Before His departure, Christ said to His disciples:

> *In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.* (John 14:2-3)

Life of saints in heaven is shown to us in the Book of Revelation. Saint John saw the following:

> *Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. (Rev 4:4) I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. (Rev 6:9) I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!* (Rev 7:9-10).

The Heavenly home is called *"the city of the living God," "Mount Zion," "Heavenly Jerusalem," "Church of the firstborn written in heaven."*

At the Resurrection there entered into the Kingdom the first who believed in Christ, the Apostles, first martyrs, confessors; and thus until the end of the world the Heavenly Home will be filled until it shall come to its perfect fullness. This is the Heavenly Church or the Church Triumphant.

Scriptures tell us that the blessedness of the souls of the righteous in heaven consist of:

- Repose or rest from labors.
- Non-participation in sorrows and sufferings.
- Being together with and consequently being in the closest communion with the forefathers and other saints.
- Mutual communion between themselves and with thousands of angels.
- Standing before the Throne of the Lamb, glorifying Him and serving Him.
- Communion and reigning together with Christ.
- Joyous beholding face to face of God Almighty.

Pentecost

The Apostles of our Lord were gathered together in one place. Suddenly, a sound came from heaven like a rushing wind, filling the entire house where they were sitting. Then, tongues of fire appeared, and one sat upon each one of Apostles. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as directed by the Spirit. (Acts 2:1-4).

This miraculous event occurred on the Jewish Feast of Pentecost. Many people from throughout the Roman Empire were gathered in Jerusalem on this day. When the people in Jerusalem heard the sound, they came together and heard their own languages being spoken by the Apostles (Acts 2:5-6). The people were amazed.

Peter, hearing these remarks, stood up and addressed the crowd. On that day about three thousand were baptized.

Establishment of the Church of Christ on Earth

Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to remain with the apostles forever and after the Resurrection. He granted them the Grace-given power of the Holy Spirit with the words,

Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained. (John 20:22-23) Ten days after His Ascension, the Lord sent down the Holy Spirit upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost in the form of fiery tongues. *"In the Holy Spirit, in His Divine power, is given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness"* (II Peter 1:3). These Grace-given gifts are in the Holy Church which the Lord founded on earth. They comprise the means of our sanctification and salvation

The Church is not a social organization but is the presence and life of Christ on earth. The life of the Church is the life in Christ. It is not simply a place where we learn about God. In His Church we experience and participate in the life of Christ.

Paul referred to the Church as the body of Christ. By joining the Church we are uniting ourselves with the body of Christ. The Church is not a building, but a People who are filled with the Holy Spirit and who share in His life bringing His life into the world. It is through the sacraments of the Church that we are united to Christ. These are the primarily the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation, and the Holy Eucharist.

Saint Nicholas Cabasilas writes,

> Baptism confers being and in short, existence according to Christ. It receives us when we are dead and corrupted and first leads us to life. The anointing with chrism perfects him who has received [new] birth by infusing into him the energy that befits such a life. The Holy Eucharist preserves and continues this life and health, since the Bread of life enables us to preserve that which has been acquired and to continue in life. It is therefore by this Bread that we live and by the chrism that we are moved, once we have received being from the baptismal washing. In this way we live in God. We remove our life from the visible world to that world which is not seen by exchanging, not the place, but the very life itself and its mode.

Christ is the head of the church

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Christ is the Head of the Church (Eph 1:22-23). He is the founder (Matt 16:18) and the Foundation (1 Cor 3:11). Christ is the Chief bishop and the eternal High Priest. The Church is Christ's Body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Eph 1:23)

The Orthodox Church does not recognize any other head of the church in the form of a "vicar of Christ on earth, a title given in the Roman Catholic Church to the Bishop of Rome.

"We Believe in One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church"

There is a Unity of the Church

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Eph 4:4-6)

The Church is Holy

The Church is holy through its Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is holy further through the Holy Spirit and His grace giving gifts, communicated in the Mysteries and sacred rites of the Church. The very body of the Church is holy.

If the first fruit be holy, the limb is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches (Rom 11:165)

The Church is called Catholic (Catholikos in ancient Greek)

Signifies its universal character. Signifies the highest degree of all-embracing, wholeness, fullness. Church is not limited by place. It embraces in itself all people who believe in the Orthodox way wherever they might live on earth.

The Church is the Church of the Apostles

The Church is called Apostolic because the Apostles placed the historical beginning of the Church.

Church is our spiritual Home

In it we work out our salvation.

> *Through the church is accomplished the dispensation of the fullness of times foreordained by the Father, so that He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.* (Eph 1:0)

The Church is a Spiritual Hospital

We can think of the Church as a spiritual hospital. The Holy Eucharist is the medicine of immortality for those who are properly prepared. Grace works on us in the Church in many ways. It is like medicine when working through the sacraments of the Church. But we need to have proper guidance so this medicine can be properly applied. Our Lord Jesus Christ is known to us as the Great Physician. He brings those who are sick with sin to His Church. In the Church we not only receive the medicines we need (the holy mysteries or sacraments), but we receive the spiritual advice and training that we need so that the mysteries will be for the benefit of our health and salvation.

Salvation is Theosis

Ultimately, salvation is a matter of theosis or deification. Theosis is based on the understanding of the nature of Christ which the council of Chalcedon affirmed is both human and divine natures united "without mixture or confusion and without separation or division." Mankind is not naturally divine. We are creatures. Just as Christ's human nature did not become mixed or confused with His divine nature, so we in the resurrection will not become mixed or confused with God. There will always be an irreducible gap between the nature of God and that of man. Saint Peter tell us that we shall be *partakers of the divine nature* (2Peter 1:4). It is the divine energies of God that we join and participate in. Grace is not created and we therefore participate directly in God with His energies. The deepest thirst that exists in mankind is not simply moral improvement, but nothing less that union with God. For this to take place God gives Himself to Man through His energies. And in this way man is fully united with God and participates in His life and still remains man.

How does the Orthodox view of Salvation differ from many in the west?

Clark Carlton explains this difference clearly in his book, *The Life: Orthodox Doctrine on Salvation*. He states that the problem is that Orthodox and Evangelicals do not use the word saved in the same sense. This means we are talking about different things. In the evangelical understanding the satisfaction theory of atonement is assumed. It presupposes that the difference between the saved and the damned is the attitude of God toward them, not any inherent quality of their own. It also presupposes that our state of being guilty can be changed in an instant.

For an evangelical, to be saved means to be declared "not guilty" by God. In other words it means that when God looks at us He sees Christ's righteousness instead of our sinfulness. It is through His

Church Hierarchy

Bishops

Metrolopitan Alexios

The Apostles placed bishops as their immediate successors and Presbyters as their helpers and as helpers of the bishops placing the further matter of ordination of presbyters with the bishops.

Presbyters

Fr. Tom Pistolis

Presbyters (literally elders) were both in Apostolic times and all subsequent times and today the second degree of the hierarchy.

Deacons

Third hierarchal degree is the deacon.

Councils of the Church

When among the Apostles there appeared a need to appeal to a higher authoritative voice or judgment the Apostles gathered in a Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15) and the decrees of this Council were acknowledged as obligatory for the whole church (Acts 16:4). By this they gave an example of the conciliar resolution of the most important questions in the Church for all times. Thus the highest organ of authority in the Church and the highest authority is the council of bishops.

atonement substituted on the Cross that Christ has satisfied the Father's justice and honor and calmed His wrath. The saved person now stands before God "justified," cleared of all charges against him and he can now enter heaven and enjoy the blessed life that god has prepared for His elect.

Those who reject Christ as the personal Lord and Savior remain in their sin that was passed down from Adam. When God looks at them He does not see the righteousness of His Son, but the sinful state of the sinner. All sinners are cast into hell as the deserved punishment for all who violate God's laws.

We can see how they can think that once saved always saved makes sense. If one has accepted Christ then one can be confident that Christ will keep his promise: *"Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."* (Acts 2:21) Being saved in only a matter of accepting Christ and God changes His view towards you.

For Orthodox is is quite a different story. Salvation is not a matter of how God views man. God is unchangeable and always looks on us with love no matter what our actions are. His love is unconditional. *for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.* (Mat 5:45) For Orthodox it is our ability to relate to God and not God's ability to relate to man.

This is why there is a difference from the general salvation of mankind and a personal salvation. For Orthodox salvation means that we attain to a "likness" of God through which we attain a real union with Hiim. Salvation refers to the spiritual state of the individual, so Orthodox Christians are hesitant to make any pronouncement about their own salvation. To an Orthodox Christian this would be to make a presumption on the judgement of God. But when an Evangelicals make a statement that they are saved they are not commenting on the state of their soul, but on the fact that God no longer sees them as a sinner. For an Orthodox Christians to say that they have been saved implies that they have attained a high level of righteousness before God.

We saw from the story of the fall of man that the fundamental sin that caused sin to enter into the world was pride. For us to be healed we must become humble and embrace the spiritual poverty spoken of by Jesus in the sermon on the Mount *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their is the kingdom of heaven.... Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"* (Mat 5:3,8). The Scripture does not say that the kingdom of heaven is promised to those not guilty, but to those who are humble and pure.

Orthodox reject the satisfaction theory of atonement because it leaves man unchanged. It is not God's attitude that must change but man needs to be changed to be reconciled with God.

The issue of faith versus works is not an issue for Orthodox as both are required for our salvation. We cannot be saved by faith alone or by works alone.

Orthodox also do not believe in the notion that once saved we are always saved. Salvation is a continuing task for Orthodox Christians. At

Review

What did God do to prepare us for Salvation?

How did our Salvation begin?

What is meant by "personal" salvation versus "general" salvation?

What is the significance of the difference?

What was the main result of the Incarnation?

How was the Church established?

Why was it established?

What is the idea of Theosis?

any time we can make choices that will cause us to fall off the path, separate ourselves from God, even after we have been baptized. Baptism is the starting point of our path to salvation.

What are the conditions for our personal salvation?

The aim of life is to seek union with God and our salvation.

1) We begin with Faith in God and the Truth of the Scriptures.
2) We receive the seed at Baptism and Chrismation.
3) Through repentance (metanoia - a change of mind) we humble our selves to receive God and seek to change our behaviors.
4) By prayer and fasting we open our heart to God for His grace to help us.
5) Through Church Sacraments we cultivate the seed and receive His grace.
6) With grace and right choice we grow closer and closer to God.
7) After death we will know God and God will know us.

We will discuss the path to Salvation in the section on the Orthodox Way of Life.

What is the Orthodox Way of Life?

How do we live day to day in a way that will bring us in union with God and eternal life in God's Kingdom? What is a life that leads us along the path towards Theosis? How do we live a life centered on Christ and His Church?

What are we to do and how do we begin?

What is your world view? Is it compatible with Orthodoxy and what is important for our salvation?

What happens at our death? How will we be judged? What is the Final Judgment?

What is the starting point for the Orthodox way of life?

What does it mean to surrender? What is Grace?

How do we put this all together as a Way of Life?

In this chapter we begin by discussing the concept of a world view. We first ask, "What are the hidden assumptions that you carry with you that determine how you view the world and think about religion? How does our society impact these. The main idea is that we all have hidden assumptions that can cloud our faith and are given to us not by the Church but by negative forces that exist in our secular society.

We then ask what is the Orthodox world view that we need to embrace. This of course will demand changes to how we think. It also may put us at odds with the mainstream thinking in our society.

The Orthodox way of life involves participation in the sacraments of the church. It is how we grow closer to God and find union with Him. The first step is our Baptism and then we have others to help us. The other sacraments are Chrismation, Holy Communion, Holy Unction, Confession, Matrimony, and Ordination.

Our Orthodox way of life cannot be fully understood without also knowing what happens at our death. We also examine the question, What is the Final Judgement?

Finally we put it all together to outline the basic elements of the Orthodox way of life. The kind of life we must be willing to embrace to become an Orthodox Christian.

Transfiguration

Jesus went up to Mount Tabor with three of his disciples and as it says in Scripture, His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. (Matt. 17:2). What the disciples were exposed to was the energies of God. This same divine light and presence exists within each of us. He purposefully took His disciples with him so they could know the God that was within each of them. When His disciples saw the defied body of Christ, they fell on their faces and were struck with the uncreated light that enveloped the body of Christ. With Christ there appeared the prophets Elijah and Moses. Also shown are two angels in the corners of the icon. Peter falls back, John feels short of breath, and James covers his eyes. They have been a witness to His glory.

We have learned that God is all-powerful and has infinite love for us. He has created everything, including us, and we know that all His creation is good. He made us in His likeness and image. After the Fall of Adam and Eve, God sent Christ, His Son, to save us from the consequences of their sin and showed us the way to eternal life with God. Christ also established the Church as a place where we can work out our own salvation in community with others.

What am I to do? How am I to do it? When am I going to do it? These are questions you should take some time to reflect on. Orthodox Christianity is not a theoretical or philosophical religion, but is a way of life, a way to perfection and salvation. A way to eternal life.

Where do we find God?

To find God in our life we do not have to go far as God dwells within us. Paul says,
For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: I will dwell in them and walk among them.... (IICorintians 6:16)

Jesus says about Himself: *I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.* (Revelations 3:20)

Paul says about the Holy Spirit: *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?* (1 Cor 3:16)

This indwelling of divine nature is not mental, but is a living and enlivening thing. All of our mental efforts to know God are only a means.

If God is already present, why do we need to attain Communion with God?

Does not Scripture say, *"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* (Gal 3:27)? And is it not a common understanding that God is everywhere? *That they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.* (Acts 17:27)

So why do we have to seek after God? Saint Diadochus tells us, "From the instant we are baptized, grace is hidden in the depths of the intellect." But Why? It is God who is hiding? Of course not. The reason is that we lack desire and our personal sinfulness, our self-centeredness, separates us from God. God is within each of us.
Saint Theophan the Recluse says that His presence remains unclear until the heart is purified after which it dwells visibly. Saint Diadochus says that we are separated from God because we have not yet made holy love habitual in ourselves.

Communion with God begins with our awakening. We may spend years, even as adults after our baptism, without a sincere interest in God. Then for some reason we choose to seek for Him. We search and discover God. God reveals Himself to us in some way. But God is still outside of us. When we are baptized God enters into our souls by His grace and becomes in live communion with us. But it will seem as if He quickly hides Himself until we are more spiritually mature.

Theosis

St. Maximus the Confessor wrote,
"A sure warrant for looking forward with hope to deification of human nature is provided by the Incarnation of God, which makes man god to the same degree as God Himself became man. For it is clear that He who became man without sin (cf. Heb. 4:15) will divinize human nature without changing it into the divine nature, and will raise it up for His own sake to the same degree as He lowered Himself for man's sake.

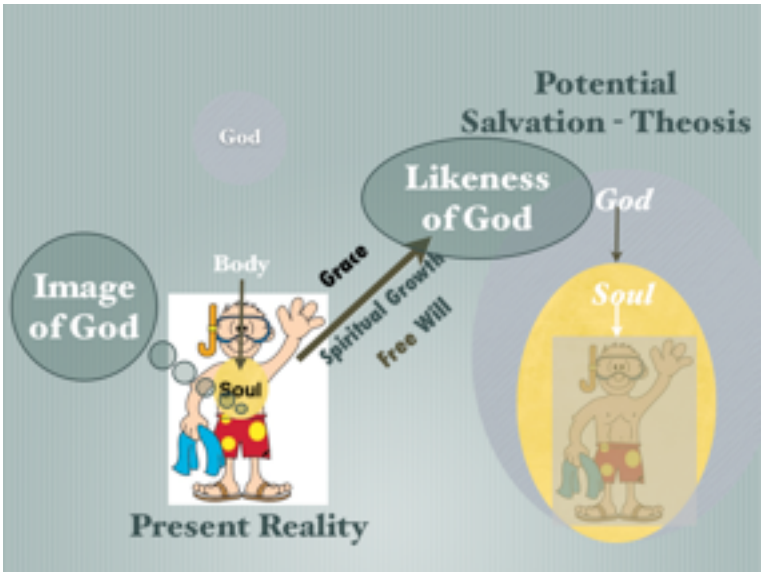
This is what St. Paul teaches mystically when he says, '...that in the ages to come He might display the overflowing richness of His grace' (Eph. 2:7)."

He *"became man that we might become [like] God."*
St. Athanasius of Alexandria

It was to live in communion with Him that He created us, and it is because we abandoned him that we are subject to corruption and death from which baptism delivers us.

We are psychosomatic beings. Our soul is integral with our body. We only need to open ourselves to His presences and we will become aware of His presence and be in constant communion with Him. We are the ones who turn ourselves away from God and separate ourselves from Him. We choose to rely on our own mental constructs (our own world view) to inform us about God. It is then our own creation of God in our minds that separates from the reality that is already part of us.

The chart below shows our condition and our opportunity. We are created by God with His image. We are endowed with a free will to choose God or to ignore Him. It is through the Grace of God that we are able to grow spiritually to the likeness of God and become Christ like. This is the image that we are made in. This possibility that exists for all of us is called Theosis . When we grow in this way the Christ within us shines through like the light of Tabor or the Transfiguration. It is a light that we cannot hide. It is the light of holiness.



What are we to do?

1) We begin with Faith in God and the Truth of the Scriptures.
2) We receive the seed at Baptism and Chrismation.
3) We humble ourselves to receive God and seek to change our behaviors which is called Repentance (Metanoia - a change of mind).
4) We pray and fast along with other ascetic practices to open our heart to God for His grace to help us.
5) We participate in the Church Sacraments to cultivate the seed within and receive His grace.
6) With grace and right choice we grow closer and closer to God.
7) After death we will know God and God will know us. It is this union that will yield our salvation and eternal life with God.

Where do we begin?

Our starting point is to better understand why we are separated from God and bring about a true change in our way of seeing the world. So the first step is examine our world view.

It is important to recognize that our current world does not embrace the Orthodox way of life. Our current culture presents us with many problems. It is based on many theories that came out of the Renaissance called the "Age of Enlightenment." Our current western culture has built into it assumptions that come from rationalism, relativism, empiricism, humanism and secularism that all evolved out of this period of human history in the Western world. It is based on different assumptions about reality than those held by Eastern Orthodox minds. It is the implications of these underlying assumptions that block us from knowing God.

What do we mean by a world view?

A world view is a set of assumptions that we hold in our mind (consciously or unconsciously) that help us understand how the world works. It is these assumptions that determine our expectations from the reality that we interact with daily. These assumptions give our mind a model to enable us to interpret what we take in through our senses. They provide a simplified model of reality to guide us. This world view is essential to us as it provides the basis for a unity of our thought and life. It guides us to define what is a good life and what has meaning in life. This helps us make choices instantaneously as we face the abundance of external stimulus from our environment. These assumptions guide all our thoughts and our actions. Without a world view we would not be able to make sense out of all the sensory inputs we receive at each moment. We all have a world view out of necessity. The question is, do we know what assumptions *ours* is based on?

Paul is very clear in his warning to Christians in the letter to the Colossians:

> *See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.* Col. 2:8

What are the common assumptions that underlie our current culture?

Listening to Paul's warning, what are the philosophical deceptions that are given to us through the tradition of men and physical properties of the world instead of according to Christ?

Here are a few:

Rationalism: Rationalism puts full trust in the conclusions of our logical mind. "I think, therefore I am" is a common quote from Descartes. We tend to think that our thoughts are who we are and that we are the sum total of our thoughts. We feel that we have to have absolute trust in our thoughts, or rationalizations, and to defend them as if they were our own flesh and blood. This approach tends to make us ego-centric as we think our thoughts are the truth and others who do not share them are incorrect and need to be taught our way of rationalizing the world. This view is in conflict with the Orthodox world view in that God's will becomes secondary to our will. It becomes "Our will be done" instead of "Thy will be done." It also leads us to many other "isms" that dominate our way of thinking.

Empiricism: Empiricism assumes that the basis of knowledge is our experience from sense perception. This is the basis of the scientific method. This world view assumes that it is through the systematic study of what we know from the senses that yields us the absolute truth. It rejects the truth of divine revelation that is recorded in Scripture.

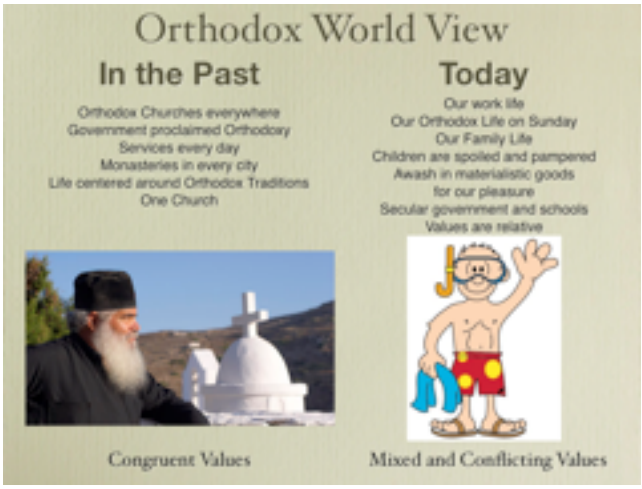
Humanism/Individualism: Humanism and individualism is based on the assumption that truth and morality is sought through rational means. It assumes individual autonomy and the idea that each individual must find his or her own truth. This conflicts with the Orthodox World View in that it rejects a dependence on faith, the supernatural and divinely revealed texts. The Church authority is rejected in favor of the subjective judgment of each individual. It leads us to secularism where the state is separated from religious or spiritual qualities.

Relativism: Relativism maintains that the basis of all judgment is relative, differing according to the situation, person or events one is dealing with. It assumes that the beliefs and religion of a person or group of persons is "true" for them, but not necessarily for others. Under this set of assumptions there is no religion that is universally or exclusively true. Likewise there are no moral absolutes, no objective ethical positions that are right or wrong. All moral values are true for some but not for others. This conflicts with the Orthodox World View that Christianity is an absolute truth given to us through the revelation of God. Christianity is often rejected simply because it claims to be True. We often deny our own truths because of relativism. This way of thinking weakens our faith.

Modernism: Modernism rejects all tradition. It assumes that what has gone before and the previous age is the "Dark Ages." This view discredits the Church Fathers and all of the Holy Tradition of the Church which is not included in the Bible.

When we take all these together, they can lead us to agnosticism, atheism or what is know as cafeteria Christianity where we are free to pick and choose which parts of the Bible we are to accept. This becomes a watered down version of Christianity and dangerous for our spiritual well being. We need to realize that we are influenced by all of these "isms" and that they have within them hidden assumptions that go against the Orthodox Way of Life. We need to explore our own world views, surface our hidden assumptions, examine them and allow them to change if need be so we can fully embrace the teaching of Christ and the Church. This can be a difficult and even painful process. We have not yet faith until we can embrace all that has been revealed to us and trust the Church as a place for the healing and nurturing of our soul. Often this is called "surrender." We give up our own mental constructs and say, "Lord have Mercy on me your unworthy servant. Help me in my ignorance and guide me in Your Truth."

This surrender is not easy and can lead to confusion in one's life if one is not careful. This is why it is important to become part of a strong Christian community such as the Orthodox Church and surrender to Her unchanging teachings and find a spiritual guide to help you as you surrender to the Truths of the Church. The Church has all the necessary tools within its boundaries to help you open your heart to God and follow the path to theosis or salvation and eternal life with Him. Remember our history, Orthodoxy is the teachings of our Lord and Savior through the Apostles without change. It can be trusted as an unchangeable source of Truth.



What is the Orthodox World View ?

As Orthodox Christians we have faith in what is beyond the comprehension of our rational mind. We know that God is beyond all rational knowledge. We have no difficulty in embracing miracles that cannot be explained by rational process or by the scientific method. Our religion is based on the absolute revealed truth and we embrace what is mystical and invisible. We believe in and totally trust a loving God. We seek salvation and union with Him for eternal life in a world that is beyond this physical world. Ours is not a way of life based on seeking happiness through our material well being. We embrace the tradition of the Church and regard the Bible as the gift of the Church. We interpret it within the context of the Church and its Traditions. We cannot simply throw out the past wisdom of our Church Fathers. We have to consider it in our interpretation of Scripture.

As a member of the Church we are members of the mystical Body of Christ. We need to beware of false assumptions as we can easily fall into the trap of following false truths and traditions promoted by our modern society and become blocked from a union with God, denying us salvation and eternal life. This is no small matter. We must accept that to follow the truths and traditions of the Church we may be out of step with almost everyone else.

Our present reality is that built into our minds are hidden assumptions based on all these "isms" given to us by our modern culture, promulgated by non Orthodox Christians and permeate our educational systems. These underlying assumptions will undermine our faith. It is important to uncover them and to consciously reject and change those which are not congruent with our faith. This demands a process of surrender and repentance or metanoia, which means a change of mind. The Orthodox Way of Life guides us to uncover our sinful ways of living, to uncover our misguided assumptions, and to change our behaviors. The Church has all the powers and tools that are needed to help us in this endeavor.

Uncovering these hidden assumptions is an individual process. Take some time for introspection to identify some things about our culture that conflict with what you know about the Orthodox Way of Life. Then ask yourself, how can the Church help you with these conflicts?

Death and the Final Judgment

What is death?

For most people it is the end of life. For Orthodox Christians it is the beginning of a new life. In spiritual terms, death is the separation of the soul from the body. Paul says it is the *"deliverance of the soul from prison"* (2 Cor 5:1-4), or a *"departure"* (2Timothy 4:6). Peter says it is *"putting off the body"* (2Peter 1:14) and in Acts it is referred to as "*sleep*" (Acts 13:36).

Paul tells us that there is a judgment after death; *"it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment"* (Heb 9:27). This is called the particular judgment. After the body gives up its physical life, the soul leaves it and goes to a state of blessedness or torment according to its deeds. But this is not the final state so it is one where the full blessedness or torment is not felt. This comes with the final judgment when the body and soul are reunited.

We are told in Scripture that there will be a second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 25:31-46). On this day there will be accomplished the universal resurrection of the dead in a transfigured appearance. It will be *universal* and simultaneous. It will be *solemn and open, strict and terrible, final and definitive*, determining for all eternity our fate.

Paul reasons that the resurrection of the dead is what makes us Christian. Christ showed us the way through death to a new transfigured life. If we do not believe in this we cannot believe in the Resurrection of Christ.

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise... But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep... For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. (1 Cor 15:13-15, 20, 22)

...all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (John 5:28-29)

What will our new bodies be like after our resurrection? We know from the transfigured presence of Christ what they will be like. They will essentially the same in appearance. But they will be transfigured. The bodies of the righteous will be incorrupt and immortal. They will be free from infirmities and weaknesses, and will not have bodily needs. The new life will be more like the angels.

BRETHREN, not all flesh is alike, but there is one kind for men, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are celestial bodies and there are terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in. glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (1 Corinthians 15:39-45)

The world as we know it is not eternal. Only our souls are eternal. Peter writes, *The heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men... the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up... Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.* (2Peter 3:7, 10, 13)

The end of the world will not end in total destruction but in a complete change and renewal.

The heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men... the day of

the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up... Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2Peter 3:7, 10, 13)

What is the Orthodox Way of Life?

All Christians are called to receive and create within themselves a new life in Christ. We are called to a rebirth. A change in our world view. We are called to seek union with God, to become like God, theosis. We are instructed to do His will *"on earth as it is in heaven."* We need to break the grip of all the negative forces of society on us. These negative forces want us to believe only in ourselves to separate us from God. We must live in a secular world, but we must not be bound by its assumptions. We must make bold steps to establish a clear boundary between ourselves and "the world" and openly renounce these negative forces for they are not the work of God and will mislead us.

Baptism is the Beginning

Once we have accepted God and have faith in Him and His Church, our path to salvation starts with our Baptism and Chrismation.

Our Lord Jesus Christ told Nicodemus, *"Most assuredly I say to you unless one is born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"* (John 3:5). It is not merely just being "born again." The sacrament of Baptism originated from the early Church. This is clearly supported by the following verses: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you"* (Matthew 28:19-20). On the day of Pentecost, after hearing the words of St. Peter about baptism they, *"gladly received his word, were baptized, and that day about 3,000 souls were added to them"* (Acts 2:41). If faith alone were sufficient, what was the need to baptize 3000 souls! Similarly, the Philippian jailer who accepted faith through St. Paul and St. Silas, *"immediately he and all his family were baptized."*

The first thing that is done in the sacrament of Baptism is to renounce the devil with the prayers of exorcism. There are three prayers.

The first reads,

...On the Cross He vanquished the opposing powers; when the sun went dark and the earth trembled, when the graves were thrown open and the bodies of the Saints arose, He annihilated death by dying, and overthrew you, the Evil One, who held sway over death...

Through us He puts you under edict. Fear Him and begone; depart from his creature, never to return. Neither conceal yourself in him (her), nor confront him (her), nor seek to influence him (her), by day or by night, at dawn or at noonday. But get you hence to your own infernal regions until the great Day of Judgment which has been ordained.

Be in awe of God, Who is seated among the Cherubim and looks on the deeps...

Begone, depart from this soldier newly enlisted now marked for Christ our God... For glorified is the Name of the father, and of the Son and of the Holy spirit, no and forever, and to ages of ages. Amen.

So we begin our Orthodox Way of Life by renouncing the devil and a surrendering to God and His Church. To surrender means we must follow the will of God and not our own will. Christ gave us two very clear moral commandments. The first was to love God with our whole heart, soul and mind. The second was to love one's neighbor as oneself. To fol-

low these commandments requires self-sacrifice, struggle and endurance.

Baptism is a death and a new birth in Christ. It is a surrender to God and to the Church which is the Body of Christ on earth. This surrendering is like planting a seed in the earth.

The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. (Mark 4:26-28)

We begin with as surrender to Church and God which are one and the same. Remember that the Church is the mystical body of Christ on earth.

What does it mean to Surrender to God and Church?

When we surrender we must follow the will of God. We give up our own definition of the world and let the mystical truths of God overwhelm us and let our reason struggle to make sense out of it rather than determining what it is we sense and feel. Let our mind seek its explanations from the writings of the Church Fathers and their interpretation of Scripture. Let the hymns of the Church speak to our inner being.

Christ made the will of God very clear to us by His own life and His teaching. He gave us two commandments:

1. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.

2. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
(Mat 22:37-39)

Now it is not possible to do God's will without some degree of self sacrifice, struggle and endurance.

Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Gal 5:24-25)

How do we grow spiritually?

This leads us to the doctrine of Synergia. The Orthodox Church has always rejected any notion of predestination. It has always rejected any implication that a person will be saved without their own desire and willing cooperation. It is fundamental to Orthodoxy that man was created in God's image and therefore has a free will. He can choose to love God or to love himself at the exclusion of God. This is the only way that mankind can truly love God. God never will force human will. God's actions of goodness are based on willing cooperation from mankind. We are called to accept His love and direction through our free choice and to follow Him.

Our spiritual growth is the result of three principles

1. Grace of the Holy Spirit

2. Our opening of our heart to receive it.

3. Our disposition of will to act on it.

We grow spiritually when the human will acts based on the divine will through grace.

This doctrine of the Church is based on the Incarnation. Christ had two wills. One that was human and another that was divine. In Christ, the human will, even through it was fully human freely followed the divine will. It is our task to learn to align our human will with God's will and to act in cooperation with God. It is the divine will that leads and the human will that is to follow. They are never equal. The human will is to always be subservient to the divine will. This is our spiritual struggle and we need the help of God's grace through the sacraments of the Church and our own purification.

This involves endurance and struggle on our part. We have to overcome the control the body has over our soul. We have to uproot the passions of the body and affirm the virtues constantly correcting ourselves.

It also requires grace. God's grace works with great patience, wisdom, mysterious management of the mind, while man struggles with much endurance. With endurance the work of grace is made perfect in us. We have examples in the Bible of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and David.

What is Grace?

The whole economy of our salvation is based on the coming of the Son of God to earth, His death on the Cross, and His Resurrection and Ascension into heaven. As Paul says, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* (Eph 2:8-9) It was Christ who sent to us the gifts of the Holy Spirit for our sanctification, our spiritual growth and personal salvation. These gifts are available to us through the sacraments of the Church.

The grace of God not only gives us the knowledge of our duty, but also inspires us with a desire that we may be able to accomplish what we know. Once you have the idea that you can accomplish salvation by your own power, grace departs and leaves you in your struggle and misery awaiting your surrender and contrition.

Apostle Peter says the following:

His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness... (By) giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. (II Peter 1:3-9)

Paul reminds us.

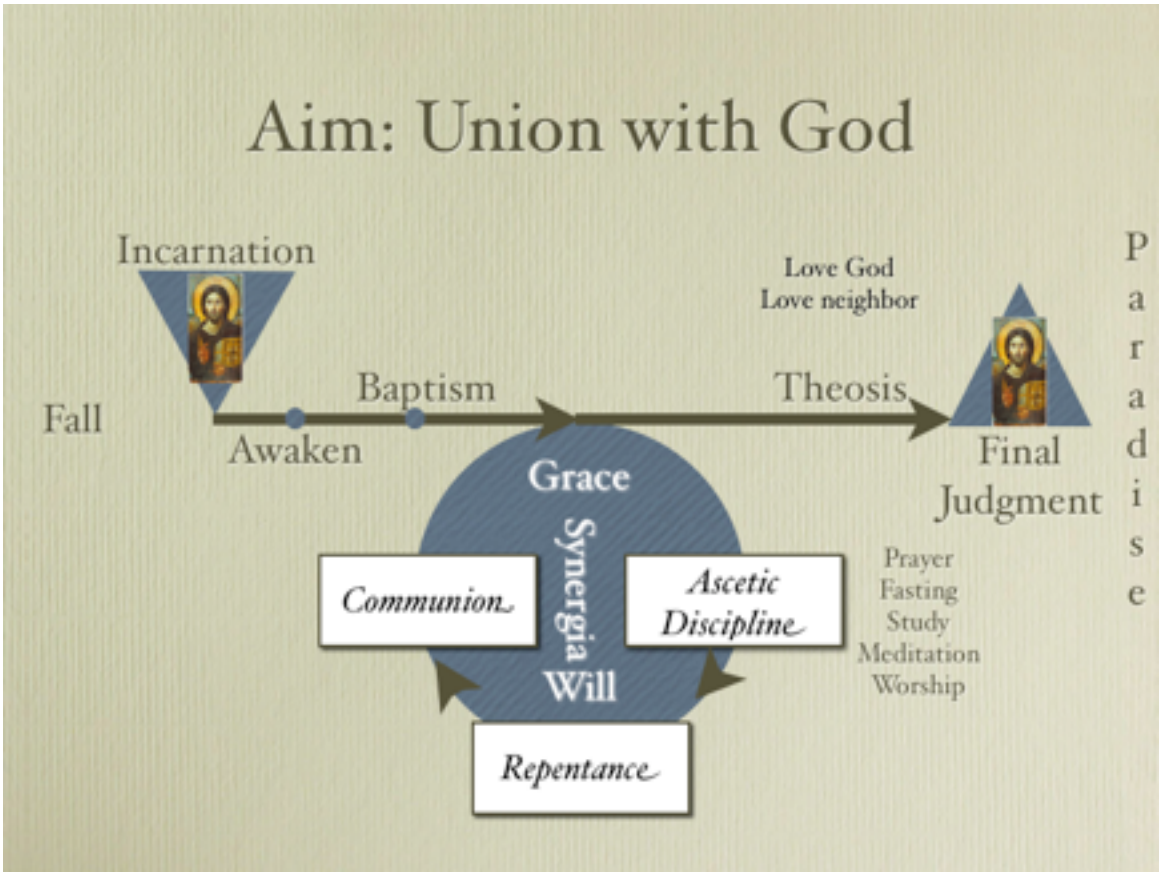
Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Phil 2:12-13)

The Orthodox Way of Life calls on us to resist temptations and to practice virtue. It is a life of continual transformation and growth. It is not a static one or one that waits for grace to change us, but is based on cooperation with divine grace. It is a life of repentance or metanoia. It is one that requires the Holy Spirit to help us. This help is always available to us in the Church when we prepare ourselves to participate in the sacraments and are sincere in our efforts.

What is repentance or Metanoia?

Metanoia is translated as repentance. It means change of mind. We can also say it means a change in our world view. Repentance is the act of reconciliation and a reintegration into the body of Christ which has been separated from us through our sin. It involves a reorientation, a fundamental transformation of our way of thinking about our world and ourselves and a new way of loving God and others. This change of mind implies "great understanding" and discernment. It involves not simply regret for what we have done but a recognition of a distorted world view and view of the horror of our sinfulness. Saint Basil the Great says, "Repentance is salvation, but lack of understanding is the death of repentance."

Metanoia is the gateway to knowing oneself and other as well as the gateway to heaven. It is a process that leads us inward but also leads outwards, changing our outer behaviors through our inward efforts at change. Repentance cannot be accomplished by emotion or guilt, but by an awareness of our separation from God and our neighbors. It is an attitude that needs to color our entire life and made a continual struggle. It is a way of life, a process of transfiguration, in which our heart and mind continually receive illumination from the Holy Spirit. It is a continuous path, constant striving, and all embracing motion or movement. Repentance is ultimately the gift of the Holy Spirit who transforms our heart. It is not the direct fruit of our individual effort. We can only prepare our selves for the reception of divine grace which is the force that transforms us.



The chart above gives us an outline of the Orthodox Way of Life. Going from left to right it begins with the Fall of mankind from Paradise. Then we have the saving Incarnation of the Son of God. This was the general salvation that opened the path for our personal salvation. Our personal path begins with an awakening to the Truth of the Scriptures and a faith in God. Awaked to the Truth we then seek Baptism to be united with the Body of Christ here on earth in His Church. We enter the Church participating in her healing sacraments combined with our personal effort and endurance to change our way of thinking and behaving. We purify our minds trying to get the bodily passions under control and to allow the soul to take its natural place as the leader. The ascetic disciplines of prayer, fasting, study of scripture, meditation on the Truths and worship help us prepare for the gift of grace. The attitude of repentance leads us to committing to change our way of thinking and doing. Communion is a way to take into our being divine grace in the form of the actual blood and body of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. All this is guided by grace which becomes stronger as we engage in this never ending cycle. It is a cooperative process where we act in union with the divine grace. This action then leads us towards theosis and we learn to live the commandments to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. At some time we will face the Final Judgment when we will be accepted into God's Kingdom and reunited with our bodies. The promise is eternal life in Paradise.

The Mysteries or Sacraments of the Church

Baptism

Chrismation

Holy Eucharist

Holly Unction

Confession

Matrimony

Ordination

Sacraments are special experiences in our corporate life as Orthodox Christians when the perception of God's presence and actions is heightened and celebrated. By participating in them, we grow closer to God and receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Sacraments of the Orthodox Church are composed of prayers, hymns, scripture lessons, gestures and processions. Many parts of the services date back to the time of the Apostles. Most of the Sacraments use a portion of the material of creation as an outward and visible sign of God's revelation. Water, oil, bread and wine are but a few of the many elements which the Orthodox Church employs in her Worship. The frequent use of the material of creation reminds us that matter is good and can become a medium of the Spirit. Most importantly, it affirms the central truth of the Orthodox Christian faith: that God became flesh in Jesus Christ and entered into the midst of creation thereby redirecting the cosmos toward its vocation to glorify its Creator.

The Greek word is 'mysterion' from which the words mystical and mysticism come from. Its root is the verb 'myo' which means to close the eyes for the purpose of protecting them from an extraordinary vision of deity.

The sacraments of which there are Seven were established by Christ directly (Baptism and the Eucharist), or through his Apostles who instituted them under Christ's teaching with the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Marriage, Confession, Unction and Ordination).

Since they were initiated by Christ Himself, or by the implicit request of Christ, they are necessary for our salvation. They were instituted as a means of transmitting Grace based on the needs of the believers. This is not to limit the action of the Holy Spirit as it can surely act outside of these ceremonies. But, Grace can only be received through Baptism and the Eucharist which were directly established by Christ.

A Sacrament to be valid must be performed by a Priest and cannot be performed outside the Church. The Priest serves as an instrument and is not the responsible principal of the sacrament. As Saint John Chrysostom says, "the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit perform while the priest lends his tongue and extends his hand."

Main Elements of the Ceremony of Baptism

Exorcism
Renunciation of Satan.

Sign of the Cross
Sign of victory over the devil.

Nicean Creed
Confession of faith.

Naming
Emphasize individuality.

Candles
Entrance in to the Light of Christ.

Font
Divine womb for second birth.

Water
Cleansing of sins.

Naked
Like at our first birth and a putting off of the "old person."

Anointing with Oil
Evade the grip of the devil.

Immersion
In the name of the Trinity three times.

Chrismation
Seal of gift of the Holy Spirit.

New clothes
New life in Christ.

Dance
When a guardian angel is assigned.

Tonsure
Gift of thanks to God.

Eucharist
Nourishment for the spiritual life.

Baptism

As we said earlier, this is the beginning of the Orthodox Way of Life. This is the gateway to grace and participation in the Mysteries of the church. It is a new birth and is performed for our salvation.

He who believes and is baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16).

The Epistles of the Apostles tell us that through Baptism we are *sanctified, cleansed, justified, die to sin, are buried with Christ* to arise with Him.

You were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor 6:11)

We are buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Rom 6:4)

The Greek word is "baptizo - βαπτίζω" which literally means "to immerse." After anointing with oil the priest takes the child facing East, while the sponsor anoints the entire body, and then immerses the body three times saying, *The servant of God (name) is baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

This is done in accordance with the command of Christ Himself.

Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. (Matt 28:19)

In Baptism all sins are forgiven. As the priest is finishing the blessing of the water he recites a prayer which says; *"Will You the Sovereign of all, show this water to be the water of redemption, the water of sanctification, the cleansing of flesh and spirit, the loosing of bonds, the remission of sins, the illumination of the soul, the bath of rebirth, the renewal of spirit, the gift of adoption to sonship, the garment of incorruption, the fountain of life.... "*

Baptism is like a resurrection, it is a new birth, The prayer continues;

"Being buried in the likeness of Your death through baptism, he (she) may likewise become a partaker in Your resurrection; and having guarded the gift of the Holy Spirit, and increased the measure of grace entrusted to him (her), he (she) may receive the prize of the heavenly calling and so be numbered among the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, in You our God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

God Parent (sponosr)

In the Orthodox Church every person, child or adult, should have a godparent (sponsor) at the time that they enter into the faith through Holy Baptism and Chrismation. To be a godparent is at the same time a great honor and a tremendous responsibility. God asks each godparent to assist in leading souls along the narrow path which leads to the Kingdom of Heaven. For this reason the role of the godparent is not to be minimized or trivialized. It is in fact a role that is holy and needs to be taken seriously.

The task of steering a child along the narrow path, and bringing them up according to the law of God is perhaps the greatest of all things in life. St. Theophan the Recluse says that there is no holier act. What better thing can we offer our children than to lead them to our Lord and teach them to imitate Him in their life.

Parents must exercise the greatest care in the selection of godparents for their children. They must bring godliness and holiness to the child. The faith of the godparent and their involvement within the sacramental life of the Church is crucial. It goes without saying that they must be an Orthodox person.

It is truly an honor to be called upon to be a godparent.

Through baptism the door is opened to a new way of life. One now is united with the body of Christ in the Church and has the opportunity to participate in the gifts of God though the Mysteries of the Church. Our spiritual growth still depends on our God given free will. We must be willing to align our will with God's will. Through the mystical life of the Church we will be supported in our spiritual growth toward this end. Baptism is the starting point of our salvation. We must now cooperate with divine grace and partake of the support given to us through the mysteries of the Church on a regular basis.

Why Infant baptism?

It is normal for Orthodox to be baptized as infants. Some Protestants argue that the only valid baptism is that of an adult who believes in Christ. They claim that baptizing a helpless infant who is only a few months old and who is unable to believe is meaningless. Why baptize a baby when it doesn't know yet what is happening? Why not wait for the baby to grow and believe in Christ and ask for baptism? If we were to follow this line of reasoning, we wouldn't inoculate the baby against disease until he grows up and asks for it! But we know better. Baptizing infants before they know what is going on is an expression of God's great love for us. It shows that God loves us and accepts us before we can ever know and love Him. It shows that we are wanted and loved by God from the very moment of our birth. Nothing shows the nature of God's grace more than infant baptism. The Orthodox Church does not belittle personal faith in an adult who seeks baptism, but instead insists that the whole emphasis of baptism is not an what the baby does or the parents or the godparents, but on what God does. The fact that we are Christians is not due to any act on our part; it is due to the act of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Of course Baptism demands a personal response on the part of the baptized child when it reaches the age of reason. The child must accept what God did for him or her in Baptism. Baptism is not a divine pass that will get us into Heaven automatically. It must be followed by a personal awareness or awakening to the many gifts of God's love bestowed upon us through this great sacrament. Infant baptism is a practice that comes from the earliest days of the Church.

Holy Chrism

The use of such a holy oil can be found in the Old Testament. It is stated that, *The Lord said to Moses, 'Take the finest spices -- 12 pounds of liquid myrrh, 6 pounds of sweet-smelling cinnamon, 6 pounds of sweet cane, and 12 pounds of cassia (all weighted according to official standard). Add one gallon of olive oil, and make a sacred anointing oil, mixed like perfume.* (Exodus 30:22-25)

The Holy Chrism is prepared from oil and another fragrant essences, which symbolize the variety of gifts of the Holy Spirit that the Chrismated Christian receives. The most ancient list of materials and the aforementioned information "concerning the materials of the myrrh," which are still used today, date from the eighth century C.E. This list includes the materials used for the preparation and making of the Holy Chrism. At the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, there is an official List of kinds of fragrances, from which the Holy Chrism is made," which includes 57 kinds of elements.

Holy Chrism is used mainly in the celebration of the sacrament of Chrismation. it is also used to consecrate holy churches, altar tables, objects, and utensils, and for other sacred ceremonial circumstances.

Chrismation

The Mystery of Chrismation is usually performed immediately after baptism as an integral part of the Baptismal service. This is the confirmation or seal of union with the Holy Church. The prayer of Chrismation says, *"bestow on him (her) the seal of the gift of Your holy, omnipotent and worshipful Spirit and communion in the Holy Body and most Precious Blood of Your Christ. Keep him (her) in Your sanctification; confirm him (her) in the Orthodox Faith; deliver him (her) from the Evil One and all his devices. And guard his (her) soul, through redeeming fear of You, in purity and up rightness, so that pleasing You in every word and deed, he (she) May become a child and heir of Your heavenly kingdom."*

Chrismation was originally done by the Apostles by the laying on of hands. As the number of Christians grew and spread to various lands, this act was replaced by the use of a special myrrh that was received from the hands of the Apostles.

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. (2 Cor 1:21-22)

The word Chrisma has a close relation to the word Christian as Christians were often called the anointed ones.

In the West, Chrismation was separated from baptism in the 13th century. In the Roman church it is given to those who have become "the age of discretion" usually about seven years of age.

Ecclesiastical Implements

The **Communion Cup** symbolizes the Cup in the Last Supper when Christ offered wine to his disciples.

The **Paten** is where the Holy Bread is placed for the Communion offering as well preparation.

The **Asterisk** in a cross formation is placed on the top of the paten to prevent the Cover touching the paten's surface.

The **Spoon** is used for the offering of the Holy Communion.

The **Lance** is used by the Priest to cut the Holy Bread.

You can see in the photo above that the paten contains pieces of bread that have been cut from a larger loaf of bread. This bread is especially prepared by a member of the congregation and offered as a gift. (See next sidebar on Prosfora)

Eucharist - Holy Communion

This is the Mystery where the bread and wine are changed by the Holy Spirit into the true Blood and Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. This gift is distributed to all Orthodox Christians who choose to partake for the most intimate union with our Lord. This is seen as the greatest of all the Mysteries. It is the climax of our main worship service the Divine Liturgy.

This was promised by the Christ on the occasion of the feeding of the five thousand.

I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world. (John 6:51)
Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. (John 6:53-56)

Since the Apostles did not believe this, he told them about His future Ascension. *Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.* (John 6:61-63)

Christ knew that these words were hard to understand.

The Eucharist was established as recorded in three of the Gospels.
And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matt 26:26-28)
Same is said in Mark.
And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. (Luke 22:19-20)

It is repeated by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians.
The Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. (1 Cor 11:23-25)

Prosphora

Prosphora is the bread used in the Liturgy.

It is prepared by a member of the parish. It cold be the priest or a layperson. Prosphora (πρόσφορα) is a Greek word meaning "offering." In one sense, all that we offer for the use of the Church is prosphora: wine, incense, charcoal, oil (for oil lamps), candles, flowers, and bread. Our offerings are never raw materials. In all these cases we take something and make it into something else. Grapes to wine, olives to olive oil, wheat to bread, etc. Prosphora refers to the bread offering.

Preparing this bread is a very special and holy service to God. By reflecting on the bread's use, the baking of it becomes a prayerful and solemn undertaking. Before one begins the baking process, prayers are in order. Although traditions vary, the maker begins with the Trisagion Prayers and the Creed. The work area should be sprinkled with holy water and a vigil light lit. While the bread is rising, it is appropriate to read some of the psalms or other spiritual reading.

This wording is very clear and does not allow for any other interpretation. He does not say this is a symbol of my body, but that this is my body. It is not figurative, not by the abundance of grace, not by a simple descent of the Holy Spirit and not through a penetration of the bread. It is truly and actually changed, transubstantiated, converted, transformed into the true Body and Blood of Christ. This had been the understanding of the Church from the beginning of Christianity. There has never been any other interpretation in the Church. Changes to this view in many Protestant churches are due to the denial of the mystery that grows with it. This is the result of a scientific world view and creative reinterpretation of the Scripture.

Having given communion to His disciples, the Lord commanded, *Do this in remembrance of Me*. This must be performed *until He comes* (1Cor 11:25-26). We can see this act performed in Apostolic times in Acts (2:42, 46, 20:7) and in 1Cor (10,11). *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.* (1 Cor 10:16-17)

It is in the Eucharist that the believer is united with Christ. It also unites believers with each other. *We being many, are one body, for we are all partakers of that one Bread.* (1Cor 10:17)

In the divine liturgy, the congregation kneels and the priest lifts up the paten and the cup praying, "Once again we offer you this spiritual worship without the shedding of blood, and we ask, pray and entreat You; send down Your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here offered. And make this bread the precious Body of Your Christ. And that which is in this Cup the precious blood of Your Christ. Changing them by Your Holy Spirit. Amen, Amen. Amen."

The priest continues, "So that to those who partake of them they May bring vigilance of soul, forgiveness of sins, communion of Your Holy Spirit, fulfillment of the kingdom of heaven, confidence before You, not judgment or condemnation."
This is called the Epiclesis, yet there is not considered to be any single moment that the change occurs.

Fathers at the First Ecumenical Council said:
"At the Divine Table we should not see simply the bread and the cup which have been offered, but raising our minds high, we should with faith understand that on the sacred Table lies the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world, Who is offered as a Sacrifice by the priests; and truly receiving His Precious Body and Blood, we should believe that this is a sign of our Resurrection."

Our Lord Jesus Christ is present in this Mystery with all His being. He is present totally even in the smallest particle. All who receive the Holy Communion receive the entire Christ. And even though there are many liturgies it is the same Christ in each one. After the transformation takes place the Body and Blood do not return to their former nature.

It is an obligation of every Orthodox Christian to receive Holy Communion.

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life. (John 6:53-54)

It unites us with the Lord.

He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. (John 6:56)

It nourishes the soul and body and aids our spiritual growth.

He who feeds on Me will live because of Me. (John 6:57)

It pledges of future resurrection and eternal life.

He who eats this bread will live forever. (John 6:58)

The bread which is used is wheat bread which has risen through the use of leaven. In the Scripture the word "artos - αρτοσ" is used for bread which is a leavened bread. The Eastern Orthodox Church has always used leavened Bread. (In the Western Church they use unleavened bread. While the source of the difference is not clear, some believe that until the 10th century both used leavened bread.)

Order of the Divine Liturgy

I. Liturgy of the Word

The Great Litany - *Pray with the priest*

Antiphons - Hymns

The Small Entrance – *Procession taking Gospel Book to Altar - Bringing to mind the coming to earth of our Lord and the importance of His message of salvation. .*

Reading of the Epistle

Reading of the Gospel

II. Liturgy of the Faithful

Cherubic Hymn

The Great Entrance – *Procession taking gifts to the Altar.*

Spiritual Litany - *Pray with the priest.*

Confession of Faith - The Creed - *Recited by all.*

The Consecration – *Priest elevates the Gifts - Kneel at this time.*

The Lords Prayer – *Recited by all in Greek and English.*

Communion

Priest receives Holy Communion and prepares it for the congregation.

Communion is offered to all members of the Orthodox Faith - form a line in the outer aisles.

Read silently the Communion prayer before receiving Holy Communion.

Read prayers of thanksgiving after Holy Communion

Greeting Priest and receiving the andidoron

The congregation comes to the front of the Church, pew by pew, to receive from the priest Andidoron, bread that has been blessed earlier, but is not Holy Communion. This is a continuation of the ancient Agape meal celebrated by the early Christians.

Preparation for Holy Communion

The general disciplines for preparing for holy communion are the disciplines of the Orthodox Way of Life. They are the practices which keep us alive to God, which open our minds, hearts and bodies to the presence of God s grace and power in our lives. They include:

- Regular participation in the Church's liturgical worship.
- Regular practice of a rule of personal prayer.
- Regular practice of fasting (Wednesdays and Fridays) and abstinence.
- Regular reading of the Bible and spiritual writings.
- Regular confession of sins (and thoughts, feelings, temptations and dreams) to our pastor, or to someone whom our pastor authorizes and blesses for this purpose.
- Regular giving and receiving of forgiveness of sins with all the people in our lives.
- Regular donations of money to the Church, and to those in need.
- Regular sharing of our time, energies, and possessions with others.
- Constant effort to do our daily work as well as we can, to Gods glory, for the good of people.
- Constant striving not to sin in the smallest way in the routine activities of our everyday life and personal relationships.

The words regular and constant are repeated and emphasized because our spiritual practices and activities must be done according to a rule. They must be done constantly and consistently with conscious attention and discipline. They cannot be left to whim, caprice or feeling.

What a person does in regard to liturgical worship, personal prayer, fasting, reading, contributing, working and serving will be shaped according to the conditions of his or her life. It will be different for each person according to age, strength, health, available time, and personal capabilities. The saints say that rules of prayer, reading and fasting should be brief but frequent, simple, pure, uncomplicated and keepable. They should be determined and established with spiritual advice and counsel in ways which permit them to be easily included within the real possibilities of ones actual life.

Receiving Holy Communion

The Orthodox Church uses one Holy Spoon and one Holy Chalice to distribute the Holy Body and Holy Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to each person individually and personally. Some ask if there is any chance to contacting a disease from the common spoon.

The answer is no. What you are receiving is not simply wine and bread with some water added. It has been changed spiritually into the actual Blood and Body of Christ. It has the fullness of God's presence and grace. They are divine (not human) gifts for our well being. They cannot harm you.

The invisible microbes that may enter our mouths from the previous communicant are harmless. From a purely experiential perspective, every chalice on Sundays is consumed in its totality by the priest, after several mouths have communed from it. No priest has ever become ill or incapacitated after consuming the Holy Gifts.

If we truly believe in God, we know quite well that God would never allow harm to come to us, most especially in the reception of Holy Communion.

Specific Preparation for Holy Communion

As Orthodox, we recognize that none of us are worthy of the great Gifts God gives us, and above all other, such Gifts are the Gifts of His Body and Blood in the Holy Communion. Nevertheless, the Orthodox Church's Holy Tradition knows and keeps the necessity of preparation for Communion. While we are all unworthy, no one is prevented from communing because of unworthiness. Yet, anyone who is not prepared for the Holy Communion can and must be prevented from placing him or herself in great spiritual and bodily danger by communing. Our Holy Church traditionally considers preparation to be fervent prayer, especially on the eve and morning before Holy Communion; strict fasting, at least from midnight, but preferably from the early evening; taking positive and persistent steps towards reconciliation with all, especially with those with whom one has had a definite falling out.

People with disciplined spiritual lives who partake regularly and frequently of the sacraments will have less specific preparation for holy communion than those with undisciplined spiritual lives who seldom partake of the holy mysteries. The latter will surely have to make extraordinary efforts to read special prayers, keep special fasts, do special good deeds, give special contributions, and make special acts of sacramental confession when these practices are not a regular, constant and consistent part of their lives.

How Often Should One Receive the Holy Communion?

Father T. Avramis[1] answers it this way. Did you know that the first Orthodox Christians took Holy Communion every day? So strongly did the early Orthodox Christians feel about this that they introduced the 9th Apostolic Canon that anyone who did not stay for prayer and Holy Communion must be excommunicated. This shows how seriously the Eucharist should be taken when offered on Sundays.

Christians sin constantly. Sin is part of our life. Therefore forgiveness must also be a part of our life. Constant sin requires constant forgiveness. *"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* (John 1:8).

The Eucharist, approached in the correct manner, takes away our sin and gives us the strength to draw closer to God. What is the correct manner? The answer is found in the liturgy itself when the Priest presents the Chalice and intones, *"With the fear of God, faith and love, draw near"*. Therefore, if you do not have a valid reason for <u>not</u> partaking, you are obliged to receive the Eucharist. If you have kept the Eucharistic Fast (i.e. not eaten or drunk anything after waking up in the morning), and if you approach with "fear of God, faith and love", and there is no moral or canonical reason to impede you - you must go forward when you hear the call.

You May fail to be regular in your partaking of the Eucharist because you feel unworthy. In this case, ask yourself, when will you be worthy?

Saint John Chrysostom

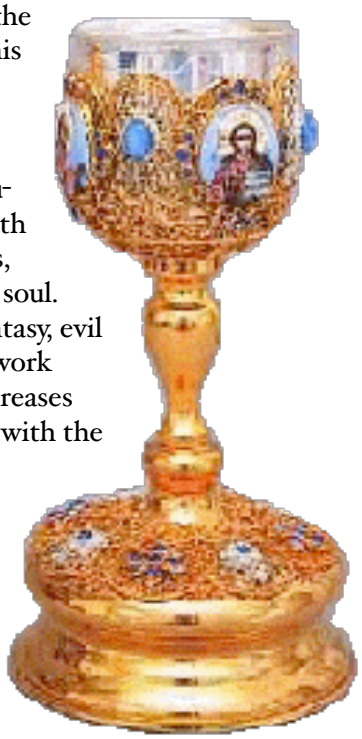
Dearly beloved and most cherished brethren, who are gathered in this holy temple to adore the living God in piety and justice and partake of the holy, immortal, spotless, and awesome mysteries of Christ: hear me, humble and unworthy as I am, for it is not I who speak and teach you, but the grace of the all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit. I speak, not on my own, but as I was taught by the Holy Canons, the God-bearing Fathers, and the ways of our Holy Church as received by the holy apostles, instructed by God. I am the humblest and smallest of men: I do not know your actions nor do I know your needs, but I do know the fear of God which commands each and every one of us, both men and women, small and great: Let none of you who is guilty of sin and who is gnawed by his or her conscience dare to draw near this sacred Fire before repenting and confessing or to come in ridicule, because God is a consuming Fire.

To those who draw near in faith and fear of Him who is our God and King and the judge of all mankind, He will completely burn away your sins and will fill your souls with light and sanctification.

But to the faithless who draw near without shame, He burns and sears both soul and body. “For this reason there are many among you who are sick and, being sick, sleep”; that is, many die without having repented or been forgiven.

Therefore, my brethren, I implore you and say: let no blasphemer, perjurer or liar, no fornicator, adulterer or sodomite, no magician or fortune teller, no thief or heretic draw near to the awesome mysteries of Christ or touch them without having confessed and prepared himself, for “it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

One of the reasons we must constantly go forward is precisely because we are unworthy.



If you are not able to accept the fact that you should be a regular participant in the Eucharist, you ask, Why do you feel this way? Only the devil stands to gain by your staying away from the Chalice. The longer you stay away from the Eucharist, the stronger the devil's influence in your life. The Body of God both deifies and nourishes. It heals, purifies, enlightens and sanctifies the body and soul. It helps us to turn away from every fantasy, evil practice and diabolical activity which work subconsciously in our members. It increases virtue and perfection for Communion with the Holy Spirit as a provision of salvation and eternal life.

If you know that you will receive the Body and Blood of Christ on Sunday, then during the week you will begin to discipline yourself and make a determined effort to overcome your passions and make every effort not to sin. You will pray and fast with relative ease for you are preparing your body and soul to receive Christ. You will be able to approach the chalice with a contrite heart, knowing you are unworthy and seeking the help from our God, accepting His most valuable gift given freely by Him for your assistance.

Ten Ways to Participate In Worship

1. We participate in worship through **frequent communion**. This is the most important way of participating in the Divine Liturgy. When the deacon comes forward with the holy chalice and lifts it high, he says, , 'With fear of God, with faith and love, draw near' " Come close to commune with God. That's a command, an instruction. After all, what is the holy Eucharistic Liturgy all about? Simply, it's the way the Church prepares, consecrates, and administers the sacrament of Holy Communion. Receiving Holy Communion, receiving Christ, is the central act of the Divine Liturgy.

2. We participate in worship through our **gathering together as the Church**. The Divine Liturgy begins with the words, "Blessed be the Kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." What's a kingdom? The place where a king reigns. Who's the King? GOD. Who are the subjects? CHRISTIANS. Where does the king reign? Where God is present and the Christians are present. God's kingship is made manifest in us during worship. One cannot be manifesting the Kingdom liturgically if he's not there. Being present is crucial to the liturgical life.

3. We participate in worship through **entering into it responsively** The language of the Liturgy contains a number of dialogues in various parts of the service. For example, the priest says, "Let us lift up our hearts." The words of the Liturgy in these dialogues invite us to involvement and participation. But because we are not taught to participate in worship, these dialogues often go unnoticed and unheeded, the commands they contain often are not obeyed in the people's hearts.

4. All Orthodox services include **"litanies"** for example "Let us pray unto the Lord", in which the deacon names a petition, and the choir responds either "Lord, have mercy" or "Grant this, o Lord." The deacon is not actually addressing himself to God in these petitions: He's addressing the whole congregation. He's saying (for another example), "For the peace from God and salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord." The choir sings the response but they are not really praying either. They give the same response to all the petitions. It's really the congregation's role to pray these prayers. If the congregation does not enter in, then nobody is praying!

How does one pray the litany? Simply do what the deacon says. The deacon says, "Let us pray for the peace from God and for salvation of our souls." You can just say in your heart. "Dear Lord, grant us your peace from above and the salvation of our souls." You can also think of particular people and situations you want to pray for with each petition. Then the prayers are no longer just words; you are now following the instruction of the litany

5. We participate in worship through **singing**. Many Orthodox people are not accustomed to singing in Church, they are afraid of being conspicuous. But even in a parish where the Choir does all the singing; it's possible to sing along with the choir softly. You don't have to sing loud enough to be heard, but sing! The patristic tradition tells us that in the past they did sing. We need to revive this tradition in all our Churches.

6. There are two places in the Divine Liturgy where we generally say the words, instead of singing or chanting them - the **Creed and the Lord's Prayer**. The people say the Creed and the Lord's Prayer as a body. In the Lord's Prayer it is clear that we are taking to God; our challenge is to make the prayer our own, so that it truly expresses our thoughts and feelings. But the Creed is different. To make the creed come alive, you must consider to whom you're confessing. I find if I think of talking to God, it really becomes personal. Because I'm telling God what I believe, it is a prayer and it touches my head and soul.

7. We participate in worship through **physical action**. Instructions such as "Let us bow our heads to the Lord" require you to worship with your body. There are many ways we use our bodies in worship in the Divine Liturgy. The most important way is when we make the sign of the Cross. This is one of the most profound things a Christian can do. It identifies ourselves as Christians.

8. We participate in worship through **listening to the readings and the sermon.** What are told at the beginning of the readings? "Let us be attentive." Unfortunately we tend to make those words into mere ritual. But the words actually are saying to us, "Pay attention, Listen!

There is something very important here." That's an instruction! Christians ought to really perk up and listen to the what the Holy Epistle and the holy Gospel has to say.

9. We participate in worship through **involvement in its structure.** The Divine liturgy has an organization and pattern. That structure is revealed primarily in what the call the Little Litanies, in which we pray, "Again in peace let us pray to the Lord." The little Litanies come at the ends of the nine significant portions of the Liturgy. If you understand this structure, you're able to participate in it.

These repeated litanies do not contribute to the length of the service, which most Orthodox consider to be a problem. But if you begin to participate in the Divine LIturgy and do the things the Liturgy instructs you to do - guess what? The Liturgy gets shorter! You don't notice the length of the Liturgy, why, because you didn't attend as a mere observer, just waiting for the final blessing to go home.

10. Finally, we participate in worship through **personal devotion**. The Liturgy can be understood in a literal sense, and ti can also be understood as symbolic. Some of the things we do in the Liturgy today have no real meaning except as symbols. Take the Great Entrance. The Great Entrance (when the Priest and the deacon carry the gifts around the church) originated in constantinople where they would begin the Holy Divine LIturgy in one Church, then move to a special saint's Church or chapel to conclude it. In order to conduct the Liturgy, they had to move the bread and wine, the chalice and paten, to a new location. So it became a grand procession, the great Entrance, when we sing, "Let us receive the invisible King."

What does it mean for us to day? Not much, if all we do is remember the fifteen centuries ago they moved the elements of the Sacrament from one church to another. But if you think of the procession (the Holy Great Entrance) as symbolizing Christ bearing His cross on the day He was crucified for your salvation that act can become an act of personal worship.

Fr. Sanely Harakas, Th.D.

Orthodox Church Etiquette

Standing versus Sitting

The traditional posture for prayer and worship in the Orthodox Church has been to stand. In the Orthodox "old countries" there usually are no pews in the churches. Chairs or benches on the side walls are usually reserved for the elderly and the infirm. In North America, we have tended to build our churches with pews.

It is fully acceptable (and even preferable) to stand for the entire service. If you prefer this it would be better to find a place closer to the back or side of the temple so as not to stand out or block someone's view.

When should you definitely stand? Always stand during the Gospel reading, the Little and Great Entrances, the Anaphora, the distribution of Communion, the special services for a Memorial or the Artoklasia, whenever the priest gives a blessing, at the dismissal.

Entering the Cathedral (Late!)

The time to arrive at the Cathedral is before a service starts. For some unknown reason, however, it has become a bad habit for some individuals and families to come late. If you arrive after a service begins, try to enter the nave of the Cathedral quietly and observe what is happening. If a scripture selection is being read, or an entrance is taking place, or during the Anaphora and Consecration, wait until it is finished to find a seat. If the celebrant is delivering a sermon, stay in the back of the nave or narthex until he has finished. If in doubt, check with one of the ushers to see if it is a good time to seat yourself. Try not to interrupt a service by your entrance.

By the way, the best way to avoid the problem is to arrive on time - then you do not have to wonder whether it is appropriate to enter or not. To partake of the Eucharist correctly you should be there for the entire Liturgy.

Crossing Legs

In some Orthodox cultures, crossing one's legs is taboo and considered to be very disrespectful. In our North American there are no real taboos concerning crossing one's legs, and we tend to do so to get comfortable when sitting. Should we cross our legs in the Cathedral during services? No. Not because it is wrong to ever cross your legs, but because it is too casual, and too relaxed, for being in the Cathedral. Just think about it, when you get settled into your favorite chair at home, you lean back, cross your legs, and then your mind can wander anywhere it wants to.

Remember, sitting in the nave is a concession to human weakness; not the normative posture for prayer. Crossing your legs is an even further surrender to laxity. You surely do not want to get too relaxed and let your mind wander off too much. In fact, when you sit in the Cathedral, sit attentively - and not too comfortably. When sitting in the Cathedral, keep your feet flat on the floor, ready to stand at attention (which, after all, is precisely what "Let us be attentive!" means).

The general rule is, cross yourself with your fingers and hand - but do not cross your legs!

In and Out

In and out should not characterize the traffic pattern through our Cathedral during services. It sometimes seems that our churches must have a revolving door at the entrance; it is used by both children and adults. Use the restroom before coming to the nave; or immediately upon arrival if your journey was lengthy. You should not need to get a drink of water during the services - especially if you plan to receive Communion. Do not come to the church in order to go to the fellowship hall; come to pray.

Leaving Before the Dismissal

Leaving the Cathedral before the Dismissal is not only rude, but it deprives us of a blessing. Worship has a beginning ("Blessed is our God" or "Blessed is the Kingdom") and an ending ("Through the prayers of our holy fathers".) To leave immediately after receiving Holy Communion is to treat the Cathedral like a fast food restaurant where we come and go as we please. We live in a fast paced world where we seem to be hurrying from place to place. But in God's presence we need to make every attempt to light this pressure to move on to the next thing on the day's agenda. When we ultimately get to the Kingdom of Heaven there will be no follow-

on agenda; likewise when we arrive and hear the words, "Blessed is the Kingdom . . ." we should be glad to sojourn in the presence of God's house.

We deprive ourselves of blessings by not being still and participating in God's holiness. Eat and run at fast food places - but stay in the Cathedral to partake of God's precious gifts and to thank Him for them.

Blot that Lipstick

Have you ever looked at an icon in just the right light and have seen the lip prints all over? It's distracting, isn't it? Lipstick may arguably look fine on lips, but not on icons, crosses, the Communion spoon, and the Bishop's or Priest's hand. Icons have been ruined by lipstick; and it is at the very least inconsiderate of others to leave your lipstick behind for them to have to deal with.

Venerating Icons

When you enter the Cathedral it is customary to venerate the holy icons. There are icons in the narthex. Newcomers to the Church are often confused or perplexed about venerating icons. It is customary when venerating an icon to make two reverences (sign of the cross followed by a bow), sign of the cross a third time followed by kissing the icon, then a final reverence (sign of the cross followed by a bow).

When venerating (kissing) an icon, pay attention to where you kiss. It is not proper to kiss an icon on the face; after all, you wouldn't go up and kiss the Lord or His Mother on the lips, would you? Rather, you would kiss their hand. Pay attention to what you are doing. When you approach an icon to venerate it, kiss the Gospel, scroll, or hand cross in the hand of the person depicted, or kiss the hand or foot. In fact, the hands and feet on some icons are covered with metal for just this purpose and so as not to damage the icon itself.

As you venerate an icon, show the proper respect due to the person depicted; the same respect you would show them in person. Remember blot off that lipstick first!

Talking During Church

Isn't it great to come to the Cathedral and see friends and family members? But wait until the coffee hour to say "Hi" to them. It just is not appropriate to greet people and have a conversation with them during the services. Besides being disrespectful towards God, it is rude towards the other people in the Cathedral who are trying to worship. Talk to God while in the church through your prayers, hymns, and thanksgiving - and to your friends in the fellowship hall afterwards.

Kiss (Don't shake) the Bishop's and Priest's Hand

Did you know that the proper way to greet a bishop or priest is to ask his blessing and kiss his right hand? How do you do this? Traditionally, one approaches the bishop or priest with the right hand over the left hand and says, "Master (if a bishop, or 'Father' if a priest), bless." In the Byzantine tradition in this country, the faithful usually take the bishop's or priest's right hand as though to shake it, but instead kiss it.

It is not appropriate to merely shake the hand of the bishop or priest, because, after all, they are not "just one of the boys." When you kiss their hands, just as when you kiss an icon, you show reverence and respect for their holy office which is to be an iconographic icon of Christ, the one High Priest. Moreover, they are the ones who bless and sanctify you, and who offer the Holy Gifts on your behalf in the Divine Liturgy. So, the next time you greet your bishop or priest, do not shake his hand, ask for his blessing.

Sunday Dress

Remember the time when people put on their "Sunday best" to go to church? In fact, dress clothes were often referred to as 'Sunday clothes." This is not all that common today; in fact all too often the dress in our churches has become too casual. In all the areas of our lives, we should offer Christ our best; and the same is true of our dress. We should offer Christ our "Sunday best," not our everyday or common wear. And we should dress modestly, not in a flashy way that would bring attention to ourselves - and certainly not in a provocative or alluring way. Our dress should always be becoming to a Christian - especially in the temple.

Here are some general guidelines:

Children: Only young children (under 10) should wear shorts to the services - and then only dress shorts. Athletic shoes, cut-offs, spandex shorts, etc., are never appropriate for wear in the temple (for children or adults!). Shoes or sandals should be clean and tied. No one should wear a T-shirt with any kind of writing on it.

Women: Dresses should be modest. No tank tops (or dresses with only straps at the shoulders), no short skirts (mini-skirts), and no skin-tight dresses. Dresses should have backs and should not be low-cut in the front. Though it is not customary for women to wear pants to church, if women do wear pants to the services, they should be dress pants (not jeans or leggings). Shorts of any type are inappropriate.

Men: Men should also dress modestly. Coats and ties are not mandatory, but certainly always appropriate. Shirts should have collars and be buttoned to the collar (the actual collar button may be undone, but two or three buttons undone is inappropriate). Trousers should be clean. Blue (or black, or green, etc.) jeans are usually too casual for wear at the services (especially those with patches or holes). Again, shorts of any type are inappropriate.

If you are going someplace after the services where you need to dress casually, bring a change of clothing with you and change after the fellowship hour. Remember to use your best judgment and good taste when dressing for the services. After all, you do not need to be seen by everyone else - you go to meet and worship God.

Pew Blocking

Never heard of pew blocking? It is the practice of sitting right next to the aisle so that no one else can get by or sit in the middle of the pew. Everyone has seen it. In fact, the best pew blockers come early so that they can get the coveted aisle seats and then be sure no one can get past them. The most effective form of pew blocking, takes place when two people take their places on opposite ends of the same pew, thus effectively eliminating anyone else from sitting in that row.

There are two solutions to pew blocking. The first is simply to move towards tile middle of the pew, leaving the aisle seats for those coming later. For those of you who cannot handle sitting in the middle of the pew, take the outside aisle spot and graciously allow those coming after you to go past you (even by moving out so they can get by). Remember, pew blocking is not hospitable - nor is it an efficient system of seating. So don't be selfish; move on over towards the middle. Don't be a pew blocker.

To Cross or not to Cross

Anyone who has looked around during the services will notice that different people cross themselves at different times (and sometimes even in different ways). To a certain extent, when "to cross" oneself is according to personal piety, and not an issue of dogma. But there are times when it is specifically proper to cross yourself and times when you should not. Here is a brief list of when to cross and when not to cross.

To Cross: When you hear one of the variations of the phrase "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" at the beginning and end of the services and your private prayers; before venerating an icon, the cross, or the Gospel book; upon entering or exiting the Cathedral; when passing in front of the holy Altar Table.

Not to Cross: At the chalice before or after taking Communion (you might hit the chalice with your hand).

Snacks for Children

You can always tell where the young children have been sitting in the Cathedral. The telltale signs are graham cracker crumbs, cheerios, and animal crackers. Parents sometimes bring snacks or juice along for children during the services. Such activity is disrespectful of the sacred services and disruptive to others in attendance.

At the very most, a bottle may be brought for very small children and babies. Eating snacks (or even whole meals) is totally inappropriate. If a child has an immediate need for nourishment, they should be fed before the services, or taken outside the Cathedral to eat a snack.

If a child did eat something during the service, parents should clean up any mess before leaving the pew.

Children who are going to receive Holy Communion should learn to fast Sunday mornings by the age of seven.

By the way, chewing gum is a NO-NO during Liturgy for everyone.

Handling the Antidoron

After receiving Communion, and also at the end of the Divine Liturgy it is customary to receive a piece of Antidoron - the bread that was left over when the Holy Gifts were prepared prior to the Liturgy. While Antidoron is not Communion - the Body of Christ - it is nonetheless blessed and should therefore be eaten carefully so that crumbs do not fall all over the place. After receiving Holy Communion, take one piece of Antidoron (you do

not need four or five pieces) and when you return to your seat - or get to a place where you can stop for a moment - eat the bread trying not to drop any crumbs.

If you wish to bring a piece to someone else, take an extra piece - do not break yours in half because it produces too many crumbs. And monitor your children as they take Antidoron and teach them to eat it respectfully

A Final Thought

North American society in the late 20th century is rather casual in its approach to life. Do not allow this prevailing attitude to enter into your Orthodox Christian piety.

There are surely a lot of other areas that could be covered here, but keep in mind that most of Church etiquette is based on common sense and on showing respect for God and others.

Always remember that you are in the Cathedral to worship God, the Holy Trinity.

The priest proclaims, "With fear of God, faith and love, draw near;" let this be the way you approach all of worship. If you do, you will probably have good Church etiquette.

(Editor's Note: The above is adapted from an article was printed at the direction of His Grace, Bishop Isaiah of Denver, who offered it to the faithful of his Diocese for their guidance. It was first printed in Word magazine, the official publication of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of New York and all North America. It was subsequently reprinted in The Diocesan Observer, the official publication of the Serbian Orthodox New Gracanica Metropolitanate-Diocese of America and Canada The author is Father David Barr, Pastor of Holy Resurrection Church in Tucson, Arizona, a parish of the Antiochian Archdiocese.)

Candles

For the Orthodox, the lighted candle embodies the victory of Jesus Christ over the forces of death, sin, evil, and darkness. The basic idea of "Light" as opposed to "darkness" is at the root of candles used in worship. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness."

Clearly the practice of lighting a candle as you enter the Cathedral is a powerful way of uniting your own prayer with that of the Church, with that of all other Christians, living and fallen asleep, and with Christ Who is the "Light of the world."

The candle should not be used as a magical substitute for prayer, but should be lighted as a sacramental expression of our own conscious prayer.

When we take a candle, it is customary to make a monetary sacrifice in the form of a donation; we are therefore mindful that all things come from God and that we are stewards of the gifts He has given us.

Taking the fire from another, already lit candle, reminds us that the Faith has been preserved and transmitted to us by those who came before us, and that our lives and work in the Church will preserve and pass on the Faith to those who come after us.

Passing the flame from one candle to the next reminds us to pass to other the spiritual light which we have freely received from God.

The warmth of the flame melts the cold wax, enabling the wick to draw it up and transform it through fire into heat and light. In the same way, God's love melts our cold hearts, enabling the Holy Spirit to purify and illumine our souls.

If you are not in the habit of lighting a candle each time you enter the Cathedral, and of lighting one on behalf of those dear to you, perhaps now is a good time to begin.

Note: In the Narthex of the Cathedral there is a place to select a candle. There you will see yellow, white and bees wax candles ands well as large and small. Which candle you select is only a matter of personal preference.

Psalm 51

Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your loving kindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem. Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,With burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

Repentance - Holy Confession

At Baptism and Chrismation we become members of the Church, are sealed with the Holy Spirit and receive Grace for our spiritual development and perfection. Immediately following this we find we are still faced with the temptations of sin. So, we need to be concerned about how we maintain our purity of our Baptismal state. How do we ever fulfill the command given to us by Christ to *"be perfect, as our father in Heaven is perfect"* (Mat 5:48)? It is only through the Mysteries of Repentance,and Confession and Holy Communion and our good works of love based on faith that we can preserve this purity. Our salvation comes as a gift when our will cooperates with the Grace of the Holy Spirit.

We are all descendants of Adam and Eve who fell from God's grace and we must struggle to be freed from influences of fear of death and the passions of this earthly existence which are rooted in our physical make-up. Christ came to give us the Grace necessary for our salvation and the path to follow. He cast the seed and we must cultivate it. Sin is easy and common. When we are not in communion and union with God, we fall and become slaves of our passions. Our body and its demands becomes stronger than our soul. But God is compassionate, so we don't have to despair about our weak condition. He will forgive us if we are repentant. God's Word promises *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). The faithful are to bring their sins to God in repentance, and through appropriate preparation receive cleansing and forgiveness.

Repentance leads us to salvation provided it is coupled with Confession. Confession is what reconciles us with the Father who loves us unconditionally. He does not want us to die as a sinner, but wishes us to return to union with Him and attain eternal life in His kingdom. We see this clearly in the parable of the Prodigal Son who said, *"Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."* (Luke 15:21) With this the father opened his arms and embraced him. The Holy Fathers have taught us that Confession is the renewal of our Baptism. The Lord knows our weaknesses and does not punish us for them if only we are willing to repent and work to change our ways.

Yet, no matter how great our repentance is, if it is not completed by the Mystery of Confession it does not give rise to salvation or reconcile us with God. It is only through Confession preceded by the sincere repentance that our sins can be cleansed and our soul be healed. Repentance alone is not sufficient.

It is no different than when we have a bodily ailment and are suffering. It is not sufficient for us to know what we are suffering from. This will not cure us. We must seek out a physician of the body to help us get well. It is the same with our sins. It is not sufficient to know them and feel sorry about them. This is only the beginning of our healing. We

The Parable of the Lost Son

Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."'

"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. (Lk 15:11-24)

must seek out a spiritual doctor, a Priest who is a Confessor, so he can grant us remission and offer the appropriate remedies for our spiritual sickness. If we do not, we will not be cured and our soul in its sickness will be eternally separated from God.

Many say, "I confess my sins privately in front of my icons at home. I pray and make the sign of my cross and ask for His forgiveness. I know He is compassionate and will forgive me. I do not want to tell them to a Priest because I feel embarrassed and I am fearful that he will reveal my sinfulness to others."

This a serious error. Even the early Christians would stand and confess their sins to God in the presence of the whole congregation. Jesus encouraged His followers to walk in the light together, to confront problems corporately, to *"tell it to the church"* (Mat 18:17). Thus James writes, *"Confess your trespasses to one another"* (James 5:16). But as time went on and the Church grew in numbers, strangers came to visit and public confession became more difficult. Out of mercy, priests began to witness confessions of sin privately on behalf of the Church.

It was Christ Himself who gave His disciples the authority to forgive sin and said, *"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained"* (John 20:23; cf. Matt 16:19, 18:17-19). He did not give this authority to icons or to anyone other than His disciples. They in turn passed this authority on to their successors, the Hierarchs and Priests. Not even the Theotokos was given this authority. It is only the Priests who were permitted to manage heavenly affairs. There is no doubt that God accepts the repentance of a sinner, but He forgives it only through the medium of the spiritual Father and the Mystery of Confession. In confession the slate is wiped clean like at the time of Baptism. This sacrament like the others is a gift from God. It is for our spiritual benefit and to help us attain theosis and salvation.

From the beginning, Christians understood that Ordination endowed the discernment and compassion to speak the words of remission, on behalf of Christ, regarding the sins of those who confess and turn from sin. For God has promised the removing of sin from us *"as far as the east is from the west"* (Ps 103:12). St John Chrysostom says, *"The priests decree below, God confirms above, and the Master agrees with the opinion of His slaves"*.

"You did not choose Me", Jesus told the Twelve, *"but I chose you and appointed you."* (John 15:16). To these same disciples Jesus promised, *"It is not you who speak but the Holy Spirit"* (Mark 13:11). Whom God calls, He equips. Paul writes to Timothy, *"Stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands"* (2 Tim 1:6). It is the grace of the Holy Spirit which enables the priest to serve God and the people. Priests are only the visible instrument of God's mercy at the performance of the Mystery, which is performed invisibly through them by God Himself. It is God (the Holy Triune) who forgives our sins.

The Priest is a spiritual physician. He will help you and give you advice about how to fight your passions. He will console you and offer solu-

Order of the Sacrament of Confession

Trisagion Prayer

51st Psalm

Penitent says: *Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I confess before You all that is in my heart and mind, both hidden and known, that I have committed this day. Wherefore I beg of You, righteous and merciful Judge, remission of the grace to sin no more.*

Priest says: *My brother/sister, whatever brings you before God and to me, you relate not to me, but to God, in whose presence you stand.*

Penitent then makes an oral confession.

Priest puts his stole over the penitents head and says: *My spiritual child, what you have confessed to my humble person, I who am lowly and a sinner have no earthly power to remit, but God alone. But because of that divine word, spoken to the Apostles after the resurrection of our Lord saying, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are retained" we make bold to say" Whatever you have related to my lowly self, and whatever you have failed to relate, whether through ignorance or forgetfulness, may God forgive you in this present life.*

tions to the many problems you face. He will embrace you and he can commiserate with you. He is not a impartial fearful judge. He is a father, a physician of the soul as well as a brother and fellow sinner who experiences the same problems as you do. He is always praying for you. Pray for him.

There are those who will insist and say that the Priest is a sinner and is therefore unworthy to hear my confession. It is another truth of the Church that the condition of the Priest does not condition the work of the Holy spirit is effecting the Mysteries of the Church. If this were true there would be no Church as we are all sinners including the Priests. In the performance of the Holy Mysteries the Priest does nothing on his own. He is only a tool of God designated through the Apostolic succession. We should not scrutinize the sins of the Priest. We do not do this when dealing with other people. When a check comes in the mail delivered by a sinful mailman we do not hesitate to go and cash it. When we are sick we do not judge the moral condition of the doctor but look for his expertise and knowledge to help us. When you receive your salary from your employer you do not question their moral worthiness. If you need to cross a river and the only bridge to use is an old one you are compelled to use it to cross. You don't reason about why it is not in better shape. The same with the pipes that deliver us water. The pipes may be rusty yet we drink the water when we are thirsty. Our confessor may be like the bridge or the rusty pipe.. He is assuredly a sinner like us and we should pray for him and have compassion. But his condition has no impact on the validity of any of the Sacraments.

Others think that their sins will be forgiven if they simply give alms and do other good deeds without engaging in Confession with a priest. It is only our pride that does not allow us to humble ourselves and reveal our spiritual weakness to a Priest. What does a person do who is carrying a heavy load when he is tired from this physical effort? He sets it down and seeks a cart or some means to carry the load for him. Likewise, when your sins provide a heavy burden, it is prudent to go to the Priest and with his help to set aside the entire burden of your sins.

With Confession you can feel an incredible sense of relief, joy and satisfaction. You spiritual life will blossom. This is a path to holiness for many of our saints. Saint Cyprian was a renowned sorcerer and after repenting and confession became a Martyr for Christ. Saint Moses the Ethiopian was a former robber. Other examples are saint Mary of Egypt, Eudocia, and there are many more. These saints sinned greatly but in repentance they laid down the burden of their sins with Confession. This is what God wants us to do so we can be united with Him and allow Him to make us gods by Grace.

It is essential to remember that the remission of sins in the Sacrament is an act of mercy. It is given for our spiritual profit, *"for edification, and not for destruction"* (2 Cor 10:8).

Thus we come before the holy icon of Christ, to whom we confess, and are guided by the priest, our spiritual father, not a judge waiting to had out punishment but a healer and helper, helps us through a cleansing inventory of our lives. When we tell God all, naming our sins and fail-

ures, we hear those glorious words of freedom which announces Christ's promise of forgiveness of all our sins. We resolve to *"go and sin no more"* (John 8:11).

The Greek term for repentance, metanoia, denotes a change of mind, a reorientation, a fundamental transformation of outlook, of man's vision of the world and of himself, and a new way of loving others and God... It is clear that what is at stake here are not particular acts of contrition, but an attitude, a state of mind. *"For this life,"* states John Chrysostom, *"is in truth wholly devoted to repentance, penthos and wailing. This is why it is necessary to repent, not merely for one or two days, but throughout one's whole life...."*

Beatitudes
Sermon on the Mount

(Matthew 5:3-10)

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit (πτωχοι τω πνεύματι): for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

2. Blessed are they that mourn [οι πενΘουντες]: for they shall be comforted (παρακληΘήσονται).

3. Blessed are the meek (οι πραεις): for they shall inherit the earth (κληρονομήσουσιν την γην).

4. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness (οι πεινωντες και διψωτες την δικαιοσύνην): for they shall be filled.

5. Blessed are the merciful (οι έλεήμονες): for they shall obtain mercy.

6. Blessed are the pure in heart (καθαροι τη καρδία): for they shall see God.

Psalm 24:3-4: Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

7. Blessed are the peacemakers [ειρηνοποιοί]: for they shall be called the children of God (υιοι Θεου, hyioi Theou), sons of God.

8. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake (οι δεδιωγμένοι ένεκεν δικαιοσύνης): for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (βασιλεία των ούρανων).

Preparing for Confession

To make a good confession it is necessary to prepare yourself carefully. Ask God to give you grace to make a thorough examination of your conscience, the courage to make a sincere and complete confession, and the strength to amend your way of life in the days to come.

Think timidly and fearfully of our weak human condition.

Begin your examination from the time of your last confession; try to recall whether you omitted anything through carelessness or lapse of memory, or from fear of embarrassment. Examine yourself using the Ten Commandments of God as a guide.

It is most necessary that you be truly sorry for the sins which you have committed, and that you firmly purpose amendment of your manner of living. Embrace the story of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32).

When I disobeyed in ignorance Thy fatherly glory, I wasted in iniquities the riches that Thou gavest me. Wherefore, I cry to Thee with the voice of the prodigal son, saying, I have sinned before Thee, O compassionate Father, receive me repentant, and make me as one of Thy hired servants.

You must take time to know your sins. This can not be taken for granted as most of us are blind to our sinfulness. Make up a sheet with the Commandments of God on one side and your life on the other. Examine the differences.

Recall all your obligations in relation to God, your neighbor and yourself. Go through the ten commandments. Review the Sermon on the mount (Matthew 5). Read the Epistle of James and the Epistles of Paul especially Romans 12:9-21 and Ephesians 4. Also read the Epistle of Saint John.

Seek out the things you should not have done and those which you should have done but didn't. Also examine your good deed and try to see the motivations which were behind them. Was there a self serving agenda associated with them?

Be specific in your examination. In each case try and to identify the time, place, people involved and so forth. This will help you to avoid meaningless generalities and make you aware of specific behaviors that you will want to examine to change.

Once you have competed this list, which may be lengthy, Identify the underlying pattern which show you the characteristics of your inner heart. Identify the passions which are governing your life. Find the one passion which conditions all the other actions. Once you have identified this you have found the root of your sinfulness.

Next, reflect on these sins and their root until you see clearly that each one was committed according to your own desire. Don't listen to the excuses your mind will begin to make for you. These don't help. Keep working on this until you are ready to honestly say, I am guilty of this and that. In this process you will feel burdened and wretched. Don't let this get you down. Feel

good that you are uncovering your sinfulness and increase your desire to uncover them all. The right feeling to have is one of regret and repentance. You will become keenly aware of how separated you are from God. This will lead you to making a vow to change. This is true metanoia or repentance.

Once you have completed this process you are prepared for the sacrament of confession. It is through the sacrament that all the guilt and bad feelings can be erased and you can start with a clean start on a new way of life in Christ. It is a renewal process that you need to undertake at a minimum of once a year.

Self-Examination According to the Ten Commandments

Use the following questions as a guide for self-evaluation.

First Commandment

Thou shall have none other gods before Me. (Deuteronomy 5:7).

Have I believed in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God in Three Persons?
Have I acknowledged God as the Lord, the Source of all good things, the Savior of my soul and body?
Have I loved God with all my heart, mind, soul and strength?
Have I constantly had the thought of God in my mind and the fear of God in my heart?
Have I failed to trust in God and His mercy?
Has my faith in God been shaken by skepticism or doubt?
Have I complained against God in time of adversity?
Have I been thankful for God's blessings?
Have I questioned or doubted the holy tenets of the Orthodox Faith?
Have I asked God to strengthen my faith?
Have I despaired of God's mercy or help?
Have I prayed to God every day, morning and evening?
Have I prayed with zeal?
Have I always attended Divine Services whenever possible?
Have I missed any of them without good reason?
Have I tried to serve God and keep His commandments?
Have I preferred religious books over others? Have I, in fact, read them?
Have I read atheistic or heretical books out of sinful curiosity?
Have I attended the meetings of heretics and schismatics?
Have I willingly contributed to charitable causes and to the Church? Have I given a sacrificial portion of my resources?
Have I neglected my duties to God through fear of ridicule or persecution?
Have I denied that I am a Christian?
Have I denied any teaching of the Orthodox Faith?
Have I given way to superstition?
Have I consulted astrologers, fortune-tellers or spiritualists?
Have I put myself before God?
Have I forgotten or neglected the most important thing in life, that is, preparing for eternity?
How will I answer God if I have given myself up to vanity, sloth, pleasure and carelessness?

Second Commandment

Thou shall not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them ... (Deuteronomy 5:8,9a).

Have I made an idol of any person or thing?
Have I given to any one or to any thing the worship that is due to God alone?
Have I put God first? Or have I given first place to: accumulation of money, acquisition of property, amusement or entertainment, food and drink, clothes, self-adornment, attention to myself, eliciting praise, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, spending time in distractions, obsession with myself or with other persons or things?
Have I been distracted from God by a passion for watching television or movies, attending the theater or playing games of one sort or another?
Have I been so anxious about myself, my family or my friends that I have neglected God, failed to serve Him and not carried out what is required of me by the Church?
Have I given too much attention to my home and its furnishings, its decoration and repair?
Have I paid too much attention to a car, truck, van, boat or other vehicle of travel?
Have I been irreverent during Divine Services, let my attention wander or been insincere?
Have I neglected to receive Holy Communion regularly?

Have I received the Divine Gifts without due preparation?
Have I made an idol of myself?
Have I made an idol of some passion? love of money? gluttony? sexual obsession? anger?
Have I allowed a passion to take possession of my heart?
Have I read the Holy Scriptures regularly?
Have I read books that would be spiritually nourishing?
Have I set before myself the holy life of Jesus my Savior and tried to imitate Him?
Have I called on Him to help me?
Have I read the lives of the Saints and tried to imitate their virtues, especially those of my Patron Saint?
Have I asked for their prayers and their strength?

Third Commandment

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain (Deuteronomy 5:11).

Have I profaned the name of God in any way?
Have I been thoughtless or irreverent with the name of God?
Have I used the name of God in a curse?
Have I treated something holy as a joke, or joked about holy things?
Have I grumbled toward God or even renounced Him at any time?
Have I shown due respect to the clergy and the faithful or hindered them in their work?
Have I shown respect for all other people?
Have I prayed absentmindedly or inattentively?
Have I cursed anyone or anything?
Have I sworn a false oath?
Have I broken an oath or a promise?
Have I entered into any sinful or unlawful contract or made such a promise?
Have I given in to despondency?

Fourth Commandment

Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee (Deuteronomy 5:12).

Have I failed to attend Divine Services on the Lord's Day or on a Great Feast Day without just cause?
Have I kept others from attending Divine Services?
Have I done unnecessary work on Sundays or on Great Feast Days?
Have I violated the sanctity of the Lord's Day or Great Feasts by unwholesome or frivolous activities?
Have I distracted others from keeping these days in a godly way?
Did I pray at home if I was unable to attend Divine Services on the Lord's Day or a Great Feast Day?
Did I make every effort to worship "in spirit and in truth" while I was at a Divine Service?
Did I allow myself to be distracted by worldly concerns at a Divine Service? to judge others? to think of unwholesome or frivolous things?
Did I make the effort to come to Divine Services on time?
Have I diligently kept the fasts of the Church?
Have I caused anyone else to violate the fasts or tempted anyone to do so?
Have I fasted properly in my heart, realizing a hunger for God and life in Him, rather than legalistically, just to fulfill the letter?

Fifth Commandment

Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee (Deuteronomy 5:16).

Have I been disrespectful to my parents or inattentive to their advice and concern for me?
Have I been lacking in love for them?
Have I withheld love from them?
Have I disobeyed them?
Have I neglected them or failed to help them?
Have I cared for my parents in their illnesses or old age?
Have I deceived my parents or caused them pain by my words or actions?
Have I prayed for my parents and other relatives?
Have I prayed for the repose of my parents and other relatives who are departed?
Have I done my duty toward my family?
Husbands: Have I sacrificed my life for my wife?
Wives: Have I been obedient to my husband?
Have I encouraged peace and mutual respect among the members of my family?
Have I been responsible toward my spouse, children and others who depend on me for help, counsel, guidance or support?
Have I been wanting in love

for my spouse or harmed her/him in any way?
Have I set a good example for my children?
Have I tried to rear my children in godliness?
Have I disciplined them with patience? or in anger?
Have I been overindulgent with my children?
Have I been stingy with any members of my family or with others?
Have I neglected my godparents or failed to honor them?
Have I neglected my godchildren or failed to instruct, guide or encourage them in the Orthodox Faith?
Have I worked for my employer honestly and diligently?
Have I treated fairly and respectfully all who worked with me or who are under my supervision?
Have I respected and prayed for the civil authorities?
Have I honored those who are older than I?
Have I shown respect for all others?
Have I mocked anyone or made fun of him?
Have I respected the clergy of the Church and prayed for them?
Have I criticized them or mocked them?
Have I been embittered against them, especially when they chastised or corrected me?
Have I honored God as my Father, the Church as my Mother, and other human beings as my fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters?

Sixth Commandment

Thou shalt not kill (Deuteronomy 5:17).

Have I killed another person, or have I contributed to the death of another person?
Have I had an abortion or given support or encouragement to someone else to have one?
Have I wanted another person to die?
Have I wanted any type of harm to come to another person or group of people?
Have I tried to kill myself or thought seriously about doing it?
Have I caused injury to another person?
Have I caused injury to myself through smoking, overindulgence, drinking too much alcohol, taking drugs or too much medicine or through evil and intemperate living?
Have I given way to anger?
Have I cursed anyone or hurt anyone with unduly harsh words?
Have I been cruel to anyone?
Have I ignored someone who needed help or failed to defend someone who was being treated unjustly or cruelly?
Have I failed to respond to those who are in need: to the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the imprisoned, the homeless, the ill, the troubled, the afflicted, the depressed or those with other needs that I could help?
Have I harmed someone spiritually by leading him into temptation to commit spiritual death through heresy, schism or by some other sin?
Have I shown malice or hatred toward another person?
Do I bear any malice or resentment or hatred in my heart toward anyone else?
Have I failed to forgive anyone or harbored evil thoughts against anyone?
Have I mistreated animals or destroyed or harmed any living creature unnecessarily?

Seventh Commandment

Neither shalt thou commit adultery (Deuteronomy 5:18).

Have I committed the sins of adultery or fornication?
Have I committed the sin of masturbation?
Have I had any sexual experiences outside of marriage?
Have I done anything impure alone or with any other person(s)?
Have I engaged in bestiality, transvestitism, sodomy or any other abnormal sexual practice?
Have I degraded myself or another person in any way?
Have I forgotten or ignored human dignity?
Have I been immodest?
Have I lived in an improper way with anyone else?
Have I read or looked at immoral, suggestive or pornographic books, magazines, pictures, websites, movies, tapes, dances, plays or performances?
Have I entertained impure thoughts or fantasies? Have I been unfaithful to my spouse through impure thoughts or fantasies?
Have I looked at any person or thing in an impure way?
Have I spoken or listened to impure or suggestive language, dirty jokes or lewd songs?
Have I eaten or drunk too much? Have I tempted others to do so?
Have I associated with bad companions?
Have I been a to unsavory place?
Have I been lazy, idle or wasteful of time?
Have I tempted others or led them to commit sinful acts or to entertain sinful thoughts?
Have I tempted others through my own immodesty

or through suggestive language or actions?
Have I been unfaithful to any trust?
Have I betrayed the confidence of anyone else?
Have I judged any other person?

Eighth Commandment

Neither shall thou steal (Deuteronomy 5:19).

Have I stolen anything or wished to do so?
Have I stolen by fraud, deception or conspiracy?
Have I kept anything that did not belong to me?
Have I stolen by not rendering a service for which I was compensated?
Have I tried honestly to find the owner of lost articles I found, when it was reasonable to do so?
Have I cheated or defrauded anyone?
Have I accepted or purchased stolen goods?
Have I disposed improperly of the goods of another?
Have I paid my debts in a timely way?
Have I lived within my means?
Have I lived extravagantly or wastefully?
Have I been selfish with what is entrusted to me?
Have I been miserly in soul?
Have I shared with others?
Have I been stingy?
Have I given to those in need?
Have I given a sacrificial proportion of my goods to the Church for God's service?
Have I been honest and upright in my dealings with others?

Ninth Commandment

Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbor (Deuteronomy 5:20)

Have I slandered anyone?
Have I lied?
Have I added to or taken away from the truth?
Have I made careless statements or spoken evil of anyone? Have I betrayed the confidence of another person?
Have I criticized others?
Have I rejoiced in the failings or downfall of others?
Have I covered my brother's shame as Shem and Japheth covered their father Noah's?
Have I spread gossip or scandal?
Have I hurt the reputation of anyone else?
Have I concealed the truth or assisted in carrying out a lie?
Have I confessed to sins I have not committed?
Have I confessed all the sins I have committed?
Have I failed to come forward to defend another person when I knew he was being slandered or spoken against unjustly?
Have I tried to see the good in others?
Have I concentrated on the shortcomings of others?
Have I engaged in idle chatter?
Have I spoken unnecessarily?
Have I laughed or acted frivolously?
Have I made a real effort to be truthful at all times?

Tenth Commandment

Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbors wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbors house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbor's (Deuteronomy 5:2 1).

Have I envied others? either their lives or their goods?
Have I desired anything that was another's?
Have I damaged or destroyed the possessions or property of others?
Have I desired things God has not given me?
Have I been discontent with my life?
Have I held back anything due to another because I wanted it myself or for any other reason?
Have I hoped for the downfall of another so that I might gain by it?
Have I failed to be gracious and generous to anyone?
Have I wanted from God what I refused to give to a fellow man: forgiveness? goods? grace? physical or spiritual blessings?
Have I been greedy?
Have I been jealous of another person's goods, money, appearance, success, love, popularity, being loved by another or others?
Have I concentrated my time, efforts and thoughts on the things of the world rather than on the things of the spirit?

Prayer of Anointing

O Holy Father, Physician of souls and bodies, Who didst send Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to heal every infirmity and deliver from death: Heal Thou, also, Thy servants from the ills of the body and soul which do hinder them, and quicken them, by the Grace of Thy Christ; through the prayers of our most Holy Lady, the Birth-Giver of God and Ever Virgin Mary; through the intercession of the honorable bodiless Powers of Heaven; through the power of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross; through the protection of the honorable, glorious, Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist; of the holy, glorious and righteous Martyrs; of our righteous and Godbearing Fathers; of the holy and healing unmercenaries Cosmas and Damian, Cyrus and John, Thaleleus and Tryfon, Panteleimon and Hermolaus, Samson and Diomidis, Mokius and Aniketos; of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna; and of all the Saints. For Thou art the Fountain of healing, O God, our God, and unto Thee do we ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Holy Unction

The mystery of Holy Unction is also called euchelaeon, which is essentially a transliteration of the Greek ευχέλαιον, and stands for "blessed oil" (ευχή = blessing prayer, έλαιον = oil).

This sacrament is used when one is ill and in pain, or a time of life when one feels alone and isolated. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, or Holy Unction reminds us that when we are in pain, either physical, emotional, or spiritual, Christ is present with us through the ministry of His Church. He is among us to offer strength to meet the challenges of life, and even the approach of death.

As with Chrismation, oil is also used in this Sacrament as a sign of God's presence, strength, and forgiveness. After the reading of seven Epistle lessons, seven Gospel lessons and the offering of seven prayers, which are all devoted to healing, the priest anoints the body with the Holy Oil. Orthodoxy does not view this Sacrament as available only to those who are near death. It is offered to all who are sick in body, mind, or spirit.

Christ came to the world to “bear our infirmities.” One of the signs of His divine Messiahship was to heal the sick. The power of healing remains in the Church since Christ himself remains in the Church through the Holy Spirit.

The Sacrament of the Unction of the sick is the Church's specific prayer for healing. If the faith of the believers is strong enough, and if it is the will of God, there is every reason to believe that the Lord can heal those who are diseased.

The biblical basis for the Sacrament is found in James 5:14-16:
Is any among you sick, let him call for the presbyters of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

In ancient Christian literature one may find indirect testimonies of the Mystery of Unction in Saint Irenaeus of Lyons and in Origen. Later there are clear testimonies of it in Saints Basil the Great and John Chrysostom, who have left prayers for the healing of the infirm which entered later into the rite of Unction; and likewise in Saint Cyril of Alexandria. In the fifth century, Pope Innocent I answered a series of questions concerning the Mystery of Unction, indicating in his answers that a) it should be performed "upon believers who are sick"; b) it may be performed also by a bishop, since one should not see in the words of the Apostle, let him call for the presbyters, any prohibition for a bishop to participate in the sacred action; c) this anointment may not be per-

Order of Holy Unction Service

• Introductory Prayers and Psalms 143 & 51

• Canon

• Short Prayers or Troparia to the Saints

• Epistle and Gospel Lessons and Prayers

There are seven sets of Epistle and Gospel readings and prayers.

1. James 5:10-16; Luke: 10:25-37
2. Romans 15:1-7; Luke 19:1-10
3. I Corinthians 12:27-31;13:1-8; Matthew 10:1,5-8
4. II Corinthians 6:16-18, 7:1; Matthew 8:14-23
5. II Corinthians 1:8-11; Matthew 25:1-13
6. Galatians 5:22-6:2; Matthew 15:21-28
7. I Thessalonians 5:14-23; Matthew 9:9-13

• Anointing of faithful

Troparion (Tone Fourth)

Thou who alone art a speedy succor, O Christ, manifest Thy speedy visitation from on high upon Thy sick servants; deliver them from their infirmities, and cruel pain; and raise them up again to sing praises unto Thee, and without ceasing, to glorify Thee; through the prayers of the Birth-Giver of God, O Thou who alone lovest mankind.

formed on those undergoing ecclesiastical penance, because it is a Mystery, and to those who are forbidden the other Mysteries, how can one allow only one?

The express purpose of the Sacrament of Holy Unction is healing and forgiveness. Since it is not always the will of God that there should be physical healing, the prayer of Christ that God's will be done always remains as the proper context of the Sacrament. In addition, it is the clear intention of the Sacrament that through the anointing of the sick body the sufferings of the person should be sanctified and united to the sufferings of Christ. In this way, the wounds of the flesh are consecrated, and strength is given that the suffering of the diseased person may not be unto the death of his soul, but for eternal salvation in the resurrection and life of the Kingdom of God.

It is indeed the case that death inevitably comes. All must die, even those who in this life are given a reprieve through healing in order to have more time on the earth. Thus, the healing of the sick is not itself a final goal, but is merely "instrumental" in that it is given by God as a sign of his mercy and as a grace for the further opportunity of man to live for him and for others in the life of this world.

In the case where a person is obviously in the final moments of his or her earthly life, the Church has special prayers for the "separation of soul and body." Thus, it is clear that the sacrament of Holy Unction is for the sick–both the physically and mentally sick–and is not reserved for the moment of death. The Sacrament of Unction is not the "last rites" as is sometimes thought; the ritual of the anointing itself in no way indicates that it should be administered merely in "extreme" cases. Holy Unction is the Sacrament of the spiritual, physical, and mental healing of a sick person whatever the nature or the gravity of the illness may be.

Holy Matrimony

Marriage was not instituted by Christ. The Lord, however, gave a very specific meaning and significance to human marriage. Following the Old Testament Law, but going beyond its formal precepts, Jesus taught the uniqueness of human marriage as the most perfect natural expression of God's love for men, and of his own love for the Church.

According to Christ, in order for the love of a man and woman to be that which God has perfectly created it to be, it must be unique, indestructible, unending and divine. The Lord himself has not only given this teaching, but he also gives the power to fulfill it in the sacrament of Christian marriage in the Church.

In the sacrament of marriage, a man and a woman are given the possibility to become one spirit and one flesh in a way which no human love can provide by itself. In Christian marriage the Holy Spirit is given so that what is begun on earth does not "part in death" but is fulfilled and continues most perfectly in the Kingdom of God.

For centuries there was no particular ritual for marriage in the Church. The two Christians expressed their mutual love in the Church and received the blessing of God upon their union which was sealed in the holy eucharist of Christ. Through the Church's formal recognition of the couple's unity, and its incorporation into the Body of Christ, the marriage became Christian; that is, it became the created image of the divine love of God which is eternal, unique, indivisible and unending.

A specific rite of marriage appeared as early as the 4th century, but it wasn't until the 14th century that the sacramental rite of Holy Matrimony was formalized with a blessing, and the marital union sealed during the liturgy in joint communion with the Holy Eucharist. When a special ritual was developed in the Church for the sacrament of marriage, it was patterned after the sacrament of baptism/chrismation. The couple is addressed in a way similar to that of the individual in baptism. They confess their faith and their love of God. They are led into the Church in procession. They are prayed over and blessed. They listen to God's Word. They are crowned with the crowns of God's glory to be his children and witnesses (martyrs) in this world, and heirs of the everlasting life of his Kingdom. They fulfill their marriage, as all sacraments are fulfilled, by their reception together of holy communion in the Church.

There is no "legalism" in the Orthodox sacrament of marriage. It is not a juridical contract. It contains no vows or oaths. It is, in essence, the "baptizing and confirming" of human love in God by Christ in the Holy Spirit. It is the deification of human love in the divine perfection and unity of the eternal Kingdom of God as revealed and given to man in the Church.

The Christian sacrament of marriage is obviously available only to those who belong to the Church; that is, only for baptized communicants. This remains the strict teaching and practice of the Orthodox Church today. Because of the tragedy of Christian disunity, however, an Orthodox may be married in the Church with a baptized non-

Stefana
Wedding Crowns

The crowns express the creation of a new household, a "kingdom" which the couple is charged to rule wisely and with full responsibility to each other and to God.

The crowning is a sign of victory, just as athletes were crowned in ancient times at their triumphs. In this instance, the Bride and Groom are crowned on account of their growth as mature Christians, prepared for the responsibilities of a Christian marriage.

The crowns also represent martyrdom, sacrifice and steadfast devotion. In marriage, the couple must deny themselves and take up their cross as they relate to their spouses in building up the marriage, and to commit themselves as responsible parents to their children.

Wedding Candles

Orthodox Christian on the condition that both members of the marriage sincerely work and pray for their full unity in Christ, without any coercion or forceful domination by either one over the other. An Orthodox Christian who enters the married state with a non-Orthodox Christian must have the sacramental prayers and blessings of the Church in order to remain a member of the Orthodox Church and a participant in the sacrament of holy communion.

According to the Orthodox teaching, only one marriage can contain the perfect meaning and significance which Christ has given to this reality. Thus, the Orthodox Christian tradition encourages widows and widowers to remain faithful to their spouses who are dead to this world but alive in Christ. The Orthodox tradition also, by the same principle, considers temporary "living together," casual sexual relations, sexual relations with many different people, sexual relations between members of the same sex, and the breakdown of marriages in separation and divorce, all as contrary to the human perfection revealed by God in Christ. Through penance, however, and with the sincere confession of sins and the genuine promise of a good life together, the Orthodox Church does have a service of second marriage for those who have not been able to fulfill the ideal conditions of marriage as taught by Christ. It is the practice of the Church as well not to exclude members of second marriages from the sacrament of holy Communion if they desire sincerely to be in eucharistic fellowship with God, and if they fulfill all other conditions for participation in the life of the Church.

Because of the realization of the need for Christ in every aspect of human life; because it is the firm Christian conviction that nothing should, or even can be done perfectly without Christ or without his presence and power in the Church by the Holy Spirit; two Christians cannot begin to live together and to share each other's life in total unity spiritually, physically, intellectually, socially, or economically without first placing that unity into the eternity of the Kingdom of God through the sacrament of Marriage in the Church.

According to the Orthodox teaching as expressed in the sacramental rite of Marriage, the creation of children, and the care and love for them within the context of the family, is the normal fulfillment of the love of a man and woman in Christ. In this way, Marriage is the human expression of the creative and caring love of God, the perfect Love of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity which overflows in the creation and care for the world. This conviction that human love, imitative of divine love, should overflow itself in the creation and care for others does not mean that the procreation of children is in itself the sole purpose of marriage and the unique and exclusive justification and legitimization of its existence. Neither does it mean that a childless couple cannot live a truly Christian life together. It does mean, however, that the conscious choice by a married couple not to have a family for reasons of personal comfort and accommodation, the desire for luxury and freedom, the fear of responsibility, the refusal of sharing material possessions, the hatred of children, etc., is not Christian, and can in no way be considered as consonant with the biblical, moral and sacramental teachings and experience of the Orthodox Church about the meaning of life, love and marriage.

Koufeta

Sugar Coated Almonds

Fresh almonds have a bittersweet taste, which represents life. The sugarcoating is added with the hope that the newlyweds' life will be more sweet than bitter.

In the traditional Greek weddings they are called *koufeta*. They are placed in little bags in odd numbers and are served on a silver tray. Odd numbers are indivisible, symbolizing how the newlyweds will share everything and remain undivided. Tradition holds that if an unmarried woman puts the almonds under her pillow, she'll dream of her future husband.

KOURAMBIEDES

Wedding Cookies

Almond butter cookies dusted with powdered sugar -

In light of the perspective offered above, the control of the conception of children in marriage is a very delicate matter, discouraged in principle and considered as perhaps possible only with the most careful examination of conscience, prayer and pastoral guidance. The abortion of a child already conceived is strictly forbidden in the Orthodox Church, and cannot be justified in any way, except perhaps with the greatest moral risk and with the most serious penitence in the most extreme cases such as that of irreparable damage to the mother or her probable death in the act of childbirth. In such extreme situations, the mother alone must take upon herself the decision, and all must be prepared to stand before God for the action, asking his divine mercy.

The Marriage Service

The Orthodox Sacrament of Marriage actually consists of two parts: The Exchange of Rings and The Crowning.

Betrothal

The Exchange of the Rings

This first part of the wedding service can be equated with the 'civil service'. It takes place in the vestibule (entry) of the church; that area seen by the Church as the closest to the 'outside' world. In this service the Church first prays for the couple. Here the Church recognizes and blesses a union which has begun "in the world" yet awaits fulfillment in the world to come. After being blessed by the priest, the rings are placed on the right hand, the hand with which promises and/or oaths are traditionally made and the hand with which the presence of God is recognized through the sign of the Cross. The rings, of course, are the symbol of betrothal, agreement, authority, and stewardship from the most ancient times. The exchange of the rings gives expression to the fact that in marriage the spouses will constantly be complementing each other. Each will be enriched by the union. The exchange of rings represents a pledge to share and exchange both their physical and spiritual goods, a pledge of eternal love and devotion.

The Procession

After the Exchange of the rings the priest leads the couple in procession into the middle of the church. The priest chants Psalm 128, "Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways..." This psalm is one of the "Psalms of Ascent" sung by Jewish pilgrims on the way to the Jerusalem Temple. This point in the service most clearly reveals the "action" of the sacrament. The couple brings themselves, each other, their lives, and all that fills their lives, to the altar as an offering to God. As the couple enters into the midst of the Church, their relationship enters into the new reality of God's Kingdom.

Declaration of Intent and Lighting of Candles

Having processed into the church, the couple must individually proclaim, before the assembly, that they have come freely, without constraints or prior commitment, to be joined by God as husband and wife. The bride and groom are then handed candles which are held throughout the service. The candles represent the couple's faith and willingness to follow the Light of Truth, Jesus Christ, and that they will have their way through life lighted by the teachings of the Church.

The Crowning

After prayers are offered on their behalf, the groom and bride are crowned by the priest "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". These crowns have two meanings. First, they reveal that the man and woman, in their union with Christ, participate in His Kingship. Second, as in the ancient Church, crowns are a symbol of martyrdom. The word "martyr" means witness. The common life of the bride and groom is to bear witness to the Presence of Christ in their lives and in the world. Martyrdom is usually associated with death. So the reality of God's Kingdom in the life of the husband and wife will necessarily take the form of dying to one's self, to one's will, and the giving of one's life totally to the other, and through the other, to Christ.

The Epistle

The epistle is taken from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians (5:20-33). It presents the cornerstone of the Christian vision of marriage: the love of man and woman parallels the love of Christ and the Church. As Christ gives Himself totally to and for His Church, so the husband is to give himself totally to and for his wife. As the Church, in turn, is subject to Christ, so the wife subjects herself to her husband. Thus the two become one in a life of mutual love and mutual subjection to each other in Christ.

The Gospel

The gospel, from John (2:1-11), is the familiar account of the Wedding Feast at Cana where Christ turns the water into wine. A person must drink water simply to survive. Wine, on the other hand, is more than just a drink that quenches thirst and contin-

ues life. Wine is associated with joy, with celebration, with life as being more than mere survival. By His presence at this wedding He changes the union of man and woman into something new. Marriage becomes more than a mere human institution, existing for whatever purpose a society assigns it. It becomes, like the Church Herself, a sign that God's Kingdom has already begun in our midst.

The Common Cup and the Dance of Isaiah

After more prayers, a common cup of wine is blessed and shared by the couple as a sign of their common life together, a sharing of joys and sorrows, successes and failures, hopes and fears. This is followed by the triple procession around the center table: the Dance of Isaiah. The hymns return once more to the theme of martyrdom and union with Christ. These are the hymns that, since ancient times, the Church has used to emphasize God's blessings. They are the same ones sung at ordinations into clergy orders and signify that this couple has been set apart from the mundane world to live a life in Christ. Throughout the service things are done in threes in remembrance of the Trinity. Man is made in the image and likeness of God. Marriage is intended by God to be an image of the Trinity. It is the union of three persons, not two. Man and woman are one with each other and one with the person of Jesus Christ.

Removal of the Crowns

At the end of the service, the crowns are removed and the priest prays that God will receive these crowns into His Kingdom. The reality of the Kingdom into which the bride and groom have entered is not completely fulfilled, but only begun. Husband and wife must receive God's Kingdom and make it both a present reality and a challenge and goal of their common life. Completion and fulfillment will come when Christ returns in power and glory to complete the establishment of His Kingdom in this world by filling all things with Himself.

The Greeting of the Couple

At the end of the service, the couple stands at the foot of the altar. From the beginning, at the back of the church, they have now progressed to the forefront. Only the eternal Kingdom of Jesus Christ, as signified by the Altar, remains ahead of them. Their final act is to turn and face the assembled Church. Through this sacrament, they have become an icon of the Church and icon of Christ and the assembly comes up to congratulate them and share in their joy.

Guidelines for Marriage in the Saint George Greek Orthodox Cathedral

Your wedding is the most important wedding ever. It is an historic event that will be remembered by you for the rest of your life. Because it is so important, we want to do everything we can to make it as special and as wonderful as we can. In order to accomplish this, we need to work together and to keep in close communication in the coming weeks. If you have any questions please call Father Tom at 233-8531.

Marriage Preparation

Marriage preparation counseling is mandatory to help support a successful marriage. A minimum of four premarital counseling sessions are required before the marriage. At the initial meeting between the priest and the couple, dates and times will be set. During these sessions the religious, social , physical, emotional and moral issues of marriage will be discussed. It is important to learn what marriage means to Eastern Orthodox Christians. The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is one of the Holy Mysteries of our Greek Orthodox Church. It unites both spiritually and physically a man and a woman into one cohesive unit, respecting and proclaiming each one's individual personality, yet mystically drawing together man, woman, and the Holy Spirit into one family.

Setting the Date

The first step a couple should take after the decision to get married is to call the parish priest to verify if the Church calendar is open for the date requested and to set up a meeting time for the couple and the priest to review requirements. Please, DO NOT begin plans nor order any invitations until after meeting with the priest.

The Church has set aside certain times and dates when marriages are not permitted to be performed. These dates include Lenten periods and various Feast days of the Church calendar.

The following are additional days when marriages may not be performed:
December 24 and 25 (Christmas)
January 5 and 6 (Epiphany)
February 1 and 2 (The presentation of Christ to the Temple)
August 29 (The Beheading of st. John the Baptist)
September 14 (The Exaltation of the Holy Cross)

Marriages are also not permitted during moveable Feasts of Pascha (Easter), Ascension, and Pentecost or on the day before these Feasts. Marriages are not performed during the forty days of Great Lent, Holy Week, the Lent and Feast of the Virgin Mary Theotokos (August 1 through 15), and the Christmas Fast (December 13 through 25).

The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony can be performed on the above dates only in an extreme emergency and by dispensation by the Metropolitan.

Who May Marry?

For a Greek Orthodox priest to be allowed to celebrate a marriage, at least one of the two spouses must be of the Eastern Orthodox faith. The non-Orthodox spouse must have been baptized in a Christian Church that baptizes in the Name of the Holy trinity. A marriage between an Orthodox Christian and a non-Christian or an individual not baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity can not be celebrated in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Spiritual Preparation

You are urged, if you are an Orthodox Christian, to receive the sacrament of Confession and the sacrament of Holy Communion as preparation for your marriage. By doing so you will bring a new vitality, a spirit, and bond to your marriage that will enhance and deepen your lives.
If you are not an Orthodox Christian you are urged to partake in a spiritual preparation guided by your parish priest/pastor which will grant you a renewal, enabling you to prepare spiritually for your wedding.

Papers, Documents, Certificates

The following documentation is required:
1. The Orthodox person must be a member of the Saint George Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Greenville, South Carolina, having pledged for the current year.
2. A certificate of baptism from your parish (if you are from a community other than Saint George). If you are not an Orthodox Christian, your Baptismal certificate will verify that you were baptized in the name of the Holy trinity. If the non-Orthodox partner has not been baptized the parish priest will discuss the issue in detail.
3. If you were born outside the United States and came to this country after your 18th birthday, a certificate verifying that you are single and eligible to marry should be obtained from your home country parish priest, signed by the Bishop of the home country Diocese.
4. If either of the couple has been married before, a certified copy of the entire divorce decree must be given to the priest. If the Orthodox partner had a previous marriage blessed in the Orthodox Church, the original ecclesiastical divorce decree must be given to the priest.
5. A civil license must be obtained from the Court House of Greenville county (at University Ridge). There is a 24 hour turn around time for obtaining this license. This license must be obtained by the couple personally.
6. An Ecclesiastical License which gives the Parish Priest Episcopal Authority to conduct the marriage in a Greek Orthodox Church is also required. The priest and couple will fill out an affidavit that will be sent to the Metropolitan's office in Atlanta. The Ecclesiastical License will be mailed back to the parish priest in two weeks

The Bridal Party

Every couple married in the Eastern Orthodox Church must have a Koumbaros/Koumbara who must be a member in good standing of the Eastern Orthodox Church. This individual should be chosen very carefully for he/she is very important. In the strict interpretation of the Church, the Koumbaros/Koumbara is not the same as the best man/maid of honor, although they can be the same individual in a wedding.

In other Christian celebrations of Marriage, the best man or maid of honor is considered to be legal witness to the ceremony. The Koumbaros/Koumbara is mainly an ecclesiastical witness, the person who, in many circumstances, but not always, is given the privilege of baptizing (as Godparent) your first child. He/she is also the person you turn to for advice and counsel in your lives when needed.

You may have in your wedding party both a Koumbaros/Koumbara and a best man/maid of honor, or they may be the same person. While the role of the best man/maid is that of a witness, that of the Koumbaros is an active one. He/she exchanges the rings and the crowns and holds the ribbon as you walk around the ceremonial table together as husband and wife. Traditionally, the Koumbaros purchases the wedding crowns, the silver tray, the almonds, the candles, etc. used during the ceremony.

If the Koumbaros is from another parish, he/she must bring a letter of introduction from his/her priest. A person who does not belong to a parish of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese cannot serve in this important role. A person whose marriage has not been blessed in the Orthodox Church will not be allowed to serve in a sacramental, canonical, capacity in the wedding. Non-Orthodox persons cannot serve ins such a capacity precisely because they are sacramental, canonical responsibilities of Church members.

It is a beautiful sight to have a bridal party with attendants, groomsmen and ushers. If such is your plan, know that they do not have to be Eastern Orthodox Christians, except for the Koumbaros. Those you do select as part of your bridal party must agree to observe the practice of the Eastern Orthodox traditions.

The Bridal Dress and Attendants' Gowns

Care should be taken in selecting the bride's dress. Since crowns are an integral part of the wedding, headpieces must not interfere with the proper placing of the crowns on the bride's head. Keep this in mind if selecting any type of pill box hat or veil. The bridal dress should also exercise a decorum befitting a church ceremony.

White Runners

Because of the tendency for the feet of the bridal party to get entangled in the runner, all runners are discouraged.

The Rings

The vary nature of the Eastern Orthodox ceremony makes it a double ring ceremony. The rings should be gold (white or yellow).

Crowns, Stefana, Wedding Wreaths and Candles

"Crown," "stefana," and "wedding wreaths" are words used interchangeably. They are placed on your heads during the wedding. They may be purchased at our Genesis Bookstore or elsewhere or you can make them yourself following the traditional styles and materials.

It is permissible to wear the crowns your parents wore.

White candles are also necessary. Because the bride anagram will be holding them during the wedding, it is suggested the candles be of a size easily handled and simple in their decoration.

Photographs

The Sacrament of Marriage is a sacred and meaningful celebration, and we want to do everything we can to keep its dignity intact. We do encourage recording of the Sacrament by a professional photographer, but we also insist on rules that must be followed to keep order and dignity in the Church.

1. The photographer must meet with the priest prior to the wedding to go over policies regarding where he/she will be permitted to stand during the wedding.
2. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE WILL FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY BE PERMITTED DURING THE WEDDING BY THE PHOTOGRAPHER OR ANY MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION.
3. After the wedding, pictures may be taken in the Church with flashes, but the photographer must have been shown by the priest where on the solea the wedding party may stand to have their pictures taken.
4. There will be no moving around in the Church by the photographer/videographer once the Sacrament of Marriage has begun.
5. Within one half hour after the wedding, the photographer should be finished with all family pictures in the Church.

Again we are trying to keep the wedding as sacred and as dignified as possible. We encourage the recording of this historic event, but we also have a responsibility to keep order. Any questions should be addressed to the parish priest.

Music

The Metropolitan's Office in Atlanta has been very clear in what is allowed and what is not allowed in Church during the entrance of the wedding party and during the recession of the wedding party.

1. Only the Church organ can be used. There can be no other musical instruments.
2. An organist familiar with the electronic organ must be employed. Check with the parish priest to be sure the organist is approved.
3. Only Eastern Orthodox liturgical music or classical music can be used during the times before the wedding and after the recessional. A list of the music selected by the bride must be presented to the priest so that it can be approved.
4. If a chanter is desired by the bride/groom, discuss this with the parish priest. The chanter must be approved by the priest beforehand.
5. No CDs or taped music is allowed.
6. If the bride/groom wish to have their wedding acoustically taped using the direct sound system of the Church, it is available at a cost of $75 to cover the costs of the supplies and sound track operator.

Flowers

Our Church is quite beautiful and colorful even without flowers. In addition, though the Solea is quite large, there are limitations in space. Visibility and access for movement during the wedding must be taken into account. The best rule of thumb is to keep flowers to a minimum.

If/when flowers are used, check with the parish priest for specific guidelines in addition to the following:

1. No flowers/vases/decoration allowed on the steps or platform of the second tier of solea (the level upon which is the Altar)
2. No flowers/decorations on any icons/iconostasion
3. If candelabras/candles are used, they must have heavy plastic under them to prevent their dripping on the solea floor. This type of decoration is discouraged.
4. If any pew markers are to be used, they must not be taped or tacked onto the pews. Much damage has incurred in the past, and we will not allow such practice.
5. Because of damage to the carpet, no fresh flower petals/rice/koufeta may be sprinkled, tossed, or thrown onto the main aisle before or after the bride's entrance. An appropriate substitute would be to have the flower girl hand out individual stems to the congregation when she walks down the aisle before the bride,

or she can simply carry a basket of flowers down the aisle and walk directly to their spot on the Solea with the other attendants.
6. It is the responsibility of the bride/groom to tell the florist to have all wedding decorations and flowers removed from the Church immediately following the wedding.

Use of Language

English and Greek may be used in any combination upon consultation with the parish priest. If there is a party from another Orthodox jurisdiction that would like to use another language, it is, of course, permitted with the approval of the parish priest.

Visiting Priests

Guest Eastern Orthodox clergy may participate in a wedding in the Eastern Orthodox Church if an invitation is extended to the by the Parish Priest where the wedding will take place. This must be discussed with the priest before any invitations are extended. Certain protocol must be followed and specific guidelines must be met.

Length of Service

The length of the Eastern Orthodox wedding is approximately 45 minutes, depending on the length of the processional and recessional. You should plan for about one hour from beginning to end.
Non-Orthodox elements may not be added to or incorporated into the Orthodox Sacrament of Marriage. These include religious songs and prayers from other traditions, poems, recitations, musical numbers, etc. What is prescribed by the Church as proper to the Sacrament is all that is allowed. Care should be taken to avoid action, songs, music, recitations and the like which take away from the profound meaning and teaching that is taking place during the Sacrament.

Location of the Ceremony

The sacrament of Marriage is to be conducted in an Eastern Orthodox Church. The practice of celebrating an Eastern Orthodox Sacrament in a non-Orthodox house of worship or in the church of the non- Eastern Orthodox party is not permitted except in the extenuating circumstances and only with the permission of the Metropolitan. If appropriate this should be discussed with the parish priest.

Receiving Line

Receiving lines at the Church are discouraged.

Lighting

The Church has a sophisticated electronic lighting system and controls that should not be tampered with by anyone except authorized personnel. If there are requests for special lighting, it should be brought to the attention of the priest and approved before the wedding rehearsal

Rehearsal

When the date for the wedding has been set, the rehearsal date and time should also be set in the appointment book of the community. Usually, rehearsals take place on the day immediately prior to the wedding date. Any exception should be discussed with the parish priest. The rehearsal familiarizes everyone in the wedding party what is expected on the day of the wedding.

Unlocking and Locking the Church Doors

It is the responsibility of the Bride/Groom to call the Church office to make arrangements to have the Church doors opened and locked before and after rehearsal and the wedding.

Wedding Director

You must have a wedding director. He/she is vital to the rehearsal and the wedding. Because this person will be responsible to keep overall order and timing for the wedding, it is suggested that he/she be experienced in this area. Be sure you inform the priest who your wedding director is so that they can communicate with each other regarding the requirements in the Sacrament. The wedding director/ coordinator must be approved by the priest.

The Bride's Room in the Narthex

The Bride's room in the narthex of the Church is a beautiful facility set aside for the bride and her immediate family as they wait for the brides entrance at the beginning of the wedding. Please note that this room is only for the bride, and it is NOT to be used by the bride's maids for dressing/preparation before the wedding. The brides maids may dress in the lower level of the Church or in the lower level of the Hellenic center.
Because a considerable amount of money and effort have been spent in decorating this special room, we ask that no food or drinks be brought into the Bride's Room. If finger food or soft drinks/water wish to be made available for the bride's maids or wedding party, they may be placed in the open area

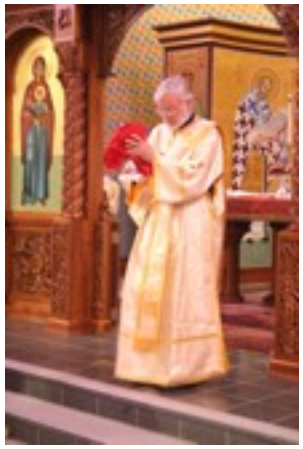
in the lower level of the Church ONLY. Again, these items are not to be brought into the Bride's Room in the Narthex. Also, because the room is highly visible from the Narthex, we insist that it be cleaned by a responsible person of the brides party and left as clean as it was found. Please do not leave papers, clothing, boxes, etc. Everything should be removed immediately after the wedding is over. The community is most appreciative our your cooperation in this matter.

A Note to the Non-Orthodox

Conversion to the Orthodox faith is not a requirement. If you desire to become an Eastern Orthodox Christian, this matter needs to be addressed with the parish priest separately and apart from the wedding. It should not be a conversion for the sake of convenience, nor should it be made to make someone happy. The decision should be made following thought and prayer and out of a true desire to become an Eastern Orthodox Christian.

Metropolitan Alexios

Presbyter Tom Pistolis



Deacon Charles Joiner

Ordination

By Fr. Peter Orfanakos

What are the Orders of the Holy Priesthood?

The Sacrament of the Holy Priesthood derives its origin from Christ, the great High Priest, Who was "holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens... a minister in the sanctuary which is set up not by man but by the Lord." (Hebrews 7:26, 8:2) Christ as the heavenly High Priest offered Himself as a sacrifice on the Cross "for all," and conferred His priesthood upon His Apostles. (John 20:21-23, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-18, Acts 2:33)

From the Apostles the office of the Priesthood passed on in an unbroken chain to the first clergymen whom they ordained, and through them to their successors. This is called Apostolic succession and it is fundamental teaching in the Orthodox Church because only through it can the clergymen receive the authority to become real representatives of Christ and the Apostles of the Church.

As successors of the Apostles and representatives of Christ in His Church, clergymen continue the work of Jesus. They teach the word of God; offer the Holy Eucharist and administer the other sacraments; they govern the Church and take care of the spiritual needs of the members of their congregations.

The Bishop

There are three orders of the Priesthood: the order of the Bishop, of the Priest and of the Deacon. The first and highest order of Priesthood belongs to the Bishop (the Episcopos). The name Episcopos was given to the successors of the Apostles (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:7) and means "Overseer." He is also called the Archpriest or Archierefs, which distinguishes him as being chief over the priests of a specific territory.

All bishops are equal among themselves as they hold the same degree of priesthood, but there are grades in their titles, depending on their

Rason: The Rason (Anteri, Cassock) was the garment of the Byzantine Empire. Today it is a tight-buttoned garment which has a belt at the waist.

Exorason: The clothing that monks began wearing at the 9th century made out of linen in order to protect themselves from the weather conditions. Throughout the years, the Exorason was made in black, and was characteristic of all monks. The Bishops, Priests, and Deacons wear it as a more formal item of clothing to distinguish themselves from the laity.

Kalimafi: A black cylindrical hat worn by many Deacons, Priests and Bishops. It is worn before the Divine Liturgy begins and during other ceremonies and even outside the Church. It is symbol of self-denial from the worldly and devotion to the divine.

administrative power. For instance, the title of Metropolitan is given to a bishop of a great or capital city. The title of Archbishop is given to the chief or first among the bishops of a large area. The title of Patriarch is given to the chief among the Bishops.

The Priest

The second order of the Holy Priesthood is occupied by the Priest. The priest is in charge of a community which he spiritually serves. He administers all the sacraments with the exception of the Sacrament of Holy Ordination, and celebrates all the church services with the exception of the ceremony connected with the consecration of a church. He leads the community in prayer and blesses them in the name of the Lord.

The Deacon

The Deacon holds the third order of the Priesthood. The word Deacon (Diakonos) means "assisstant," (Matthew 20:26; Acts 6:1-7) and he assists the bishop or the priest in the celebration of the sacraments and church services. During services the Deacon recites the litanies, the Gospel readings and other prayers and assists the celebrant bishop or priest in the sanctuary.

The Origin of the Sacred Vestments

In the Early Church, clergymen wore the same kind of garments when celebrating the church services as those worn by other people of that time. Even then however, there was a feeling that the garments of the celebrant clergy should be distinguished in some way from those of the laos (people). The feeling of reverence demanded that the garments of the celebrants should be festive, preferably white in color (a symbol of holiness and purity) and that they be decorated with crosses to distinguish them from ordinary garments.

In the course of time, the fashions of the garments of people changed, but the garments of the celebrants remained unaltered and took on a symbolic meaning. They distinguished the officiating clergymen from the laymen and at the same time reminded them all that the celebrants "are not of the world" (John 17:16) but participants of Christ's glory (John 17:22-24) clothed in the robes and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Ascetic Practices

Chapter 8

The most blessed of all people are those who exhibited the greatest repentance, with pain and inner contrition, and, in this way, extinguished the proud enemy. They humbled their unruly flesh with asceticism - subdued it to the spirit - and granted the greatest joy to Heaven with their repentance (their return to God).

Elder Paisios

Why do we need to purify our Heart? What does it mean?

What does the New Testament say about ascetic practices?

Where do I begin?

How do I pray?

How do I fast?

How does the liturgical cycle help me?

How do I study the Bible?

We engage in ascetic disciplines for the following reasons:

- Guard the Holy Spirit which has been planted within us.
- Eliminate the passions that have been joined with our normal actions.
- To purify our hearts
- To attain union with God
- To live a virtuous life

Remember, our aim in this life is to seek union with God. Also, remember that our current human condition is not normal, but a distorted one where our bodily needs dominate our lives. Our soul, instead of being aligned with God, has been captured by the demands of our body's needs. These needs in excess we call passions. We struggle excessively to maintain life in a bodily form that will sooner or later face death. Yet, we know the soul will continue to live forever. So why don't we put our priority on the well being of our soul? Why do we let our bodily needs dominate? It makes no logical sense. To overcome this situation requires a struggle. In this struggle we need God's help. With His help we can find peace and union with our Lord. We should think of this as a liberating process so our soul can live free of the unreasonable demands of the body, freed of the fear of death. This freedom will allow us to give up our self-centeredness and align our human will with His divine will. This is the condition we seek, so, at the time of our death, we will be in intimate relationship with God and be able to joyfully join with Him in His heavenly Kingdom for eternal life in paradise.

This is not a task we can do alone, solely by our own will. If we try to do it on our own we will surely be defeated. The process is a process of surrender and humbling ourselves in the face of our Creator allowing Him to help us. God will not do it all for us either. We have to do our part, we need to purify our hearts, so His grace can work with us. The means we use to do this are called ascetic practices. They are aids to help us overcome this fallen human condition. Ascetic practices are not the end we seek, but provide us with a means to the end we desire, union with God.

The Scripture writers and Church Fathers frequently write about the passions and advise us how to overcome them. They also talk about the importance of having purity of heart. What are these passions that we must overcome? What are the virtues we are to gain? What do they mean by having a pure heart? How do we overcome our passions, develop a pure heart, and act with virtue?

Passions

Gluttony: habitual greed, especially in regards to excessive eating.

Lust: A sexual desire for someone or a strong desire for something.

Avarice: Greed for wealth or material gain.

Anger: Feeling strongly annoyed, displeased or hostile to another person.

Dejection: being sad, depressed or low in spirits.

Listlessness: Lacking energy or enthusiasm feeling pleasure in one own achievements, sensing one's own importance.

Virtues

Temperance: moderation and self-restraint especially in regards to eating and drinking.

Chastity: Refraining from sexual relations with extra-marital relationships.

Generosity: Freely giving of one's resources and time and attention beyond what is strictly necessary.

Mildness: having a gentle disposition and not being easily provoked

Happiness: Feeling satisfied and content with what one has and has been given.

Diligence: being persistent and careful in ones activities.

Humility: having a modest view of your own importance.

What are passions?

Passions are the uncontrolled desires that come from our bodily needs. They subordinate our soul to our egoistic or self will. They come about because we forget about God and only think of our own needs. The seven passions are: gluttony, lust, avarice, anger, dejection, listlessness and pride. All these passions lead us to sin, but with proper discipline can be offset by virtues.

How do passions develop into sin?

Sin starts with a suggestion that comes into our mind. For example, this could begin by someone expressing an opinion that is different than your own. This suggests to you that this person is against you in some way. This triggers feelings of anger in your mind. Next, you struggle with this feeling of anger trying to put it out of your mind. But, as you struggle with it, you find yourself attracted to the feeling more and more. You want to rebuke the other person. Eventually you let yourself become angry. Then you choose to take some action as a result of your anger. You yell or try to discredit the other person. When you take such action based on the suggestion, you are said to be enslaved by your passion, separated from God and solely focused on your own need to justify yourself. You are driven to react with anger which is a sin or an action taken without communion with God. It is something that you do not seem able to control. This is the way sin develops and persists.

Our challenge is to overcome these reactive patterns that seem to be etched in our minds, so we can avoid sin and instead show a virtue such as mildness. To stop this kind of reaction we need to make a change of mind which in Greek is metanoia or translated as repentance. This is not always easy, but is an important task for our spiritual well being. These deep patterns must be broken and separated from automatic responses. The path to our salvation calls us to develop the capacity to control each of the passions.

The most basic of our passions is our desire for food. Of course we cannot live without food, so the body puts a high priority on this desire to meet its basic need to maintain its life. This is a natural and good desire God gave us for our well-being. There is nothing sinful about food itself or our desire for it. But most of us end up eating for pleasure and not just for the health of our body. This is why dieting is such a hugh industry. Many of us are controlled by our appetites. We know we should not have that first piece of chocolate cake or the second one, but somehow we are captured by the delight it gives us even though we know it is not what our body needs for good health and the pleasure only lasts a few seconds. The sin is when we are no longer in control of this desire for food. It is when the attraction becomes stronger and stronger as we think about it and find that we cannot stop our actions. This attraction pulls us to over eat or to buy foods we cannot afford. This strong attraction to food is why the Church Fathers put such an emphasis on fasting. In their wisdom they knew that if we learn to control this one passion, we will have the strength to deal with the others. It is the natural first step in controlling our passions.

What are the main ascetic disciplines?

Prayer: Having a dialogue with God on a daily basis.

Fasting: following a regular practice of abstaining from all or some kinds of food or drink.

Reading Scripture and the Church Fathers: Having a daily set plan to read the Scriptures and the writings of the church fathers.

Vigils: a form of prayer that goes on throughout the night.

Prostrations: a way of praying where one kneels on the ground and stretches out and puts his face to the ground.

Sign of the Cross: taking the right hand and putting the thumb and first two fingers together and tracing the cross on one's body beginning from right shoulder to left and then the forehead to abdomen.

Worship: Attending regularly the weekly divine liturgies and the services for the special feasts of the church.

Sacraments: participating regularly in the sacraments of Holy Communion, confession and holy Unction.

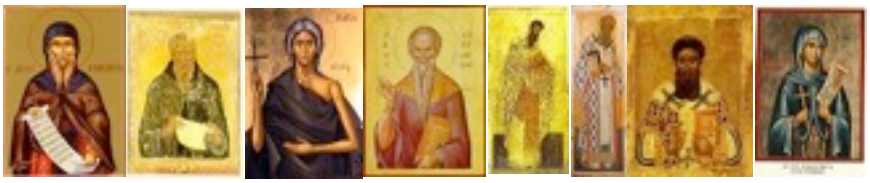
What are virtues?

Virtuous acts are the fruits of ascetic disciplines and they only come by grace. Our efforts only provide the conditions for us to receive grace.

I have planted, Appolos labored; but God gave the increase. (1Cor 3:6)

The main virtues are temperance, chastity, generosity, mildness, happiness, diligence, and humility. The essential attitude for each of them is the acknowledgment of the omniscience of God, the seeking of salivation with humility, laboring with sincerity and a pure conscience, and doing all we know how to do to control our passions.

If we study the lives of saints who are people who lived virtuous lives, we find that they fast, engage in vigils, periods of solitude, read Scripture regularly, read the writings of the Church Fathers, attend church services and participate in the sacraments regularly. These are all known as ascetic practices.



What is meant by purity of heart?

The term heart is often used by our Church Fathers. Are they referring to our physical heart? Not necessarily. Are they thinking about our emotions and affections? No, they are thinking of more than this. Here is how Saint Theophan the Recluse puts it:

"The heart is the innermost man, or spirit. Here are located self-awareness, the conscience, the idea of God and of one's complete dependence on Him, and all the eternal treasures of the spiritual life"

The "heart" is like the center of our spiritual being. It is through the "heart" that grace of God penetrates us. It is the place of Christ within us.

When our Church Fathers tell us to purify our heart they mean to remove all our tendencies toward sin so our heart is pure and able to freely receive the work of the Holy Spirit. A pure heart is passionately in love with God. This is how Christ becomes our guiding force from within. One with a pure heart overcomes sin and is blessed by grace to live a virtuous life.

What does the New Testament say about ascetic practices?

At the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, He was *"lead by the Spirit"* and withdrew into the desert where he fasted. He could have chosen another path, but He was showing us the path we must take to prepare our human bodies for its eventual resurrection. While in the desert He

A Rule for Discipline

Everyone needs a rule for their discipline. It must be specific and include books to read (when, how much, how to and what to do), prayer, fasting and good works. The rule must be practical and doable. This is where your guide can help you. One starting out tends to have too grand of a rule and then fails at following it.

We need to cultivate the attitude that we are blind, poor and naked. We need to have contrition of the heart, that is feeling of remorseful and penitent. We need to feel a pain and sorrow for our uncleanness. We must feel the need for ceaseless repentance.

Christ made our moral duties very clear. They are to love God with our whole heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. As we have said previously this requires struggle and endurance. The Church supports us in this struggle. It provides us with instruction from the Scriptures, the examples of the Saints, the fasting periods and days of the Church, the Holy Sacraments or Mysteries, and Holy people.

was engaged in *"spiritual warfare." He "fasted forty days and forty nights." He faced "wild beasts."*

What is meant by the desert? It is a place where one can meditate alone, pray, fast and reflect on ones most inner essence intensifying their spiritual reality. The desert is a place that separates us from the normal activities of a secular life. It is a place where we can be alone with God. What is most important, our Lord showed us this path and calls us to follow His example. We are all called to go to the "desert" periodically.

In the Gospel of Matthew the Lord says, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and may glorify your Father who is in heaven."* The *"good works"* he is referring to are the Beatitudes: blessed are the poor, blessed are the meek, blessed are those who hunger, blessed are the pure of heart. He was not talking here about social action, but about our spiritual development. These ideals found in the Beatitudes underly ascetic practices for all Orthodox Christians.

The Lord very directly asks us to perfect ourselves. He says, *"Be ye therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*[2] He clearly tells us that we must work on our own self to perfect our way of being. He is not just telling us to be better than average, but to be "perfect" like God. Matthew shows us that the Lord initiated ascetic practices in addition to the withdrawal into the "desert." Jesus could have abolished ascetic practices, but He purified them and gave them the proper status within our spiritual life. We are to do them, but to do them without showing off, without hypocrisy or glory. He says, *"Take heed that you do not your righteousness before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward with your Father in heaven."*[3] He shows us how to pray and He instructs His disciples to fast when He is taken away. At one point he told His disciples that they were unable to cast out the devil, because this kind can only be driven out through prayer and fasting.[4]

Paul's epistles to the Romans and the Galatians are often used by those who oppose ascetic practices in the name of modernism. They use portions of these epistles to justify that salvation is a free gift of God and that any type of works, especially ascetic activities such as fasting, prayer, almsgiving and worship contradict the free nature of grace and free gift of salvation. This way of thinking denies Tradition, the Gospel teachings and the experience of many saints. It is an "either/or" way of thinking, believing that if one was saved by faith alone then one is not saved by works. To properly understand these two epistles, one has to distinguish between the works in the law as understood in Judaism, and the works in the law as refined by Christ. Our salvation is not based on either the extreme of faith alone or by our works alone. Both of these extremes are false yet both faith and works are necessary. God created man with a free will in His image. As a result of this, God provided us with a synergistic path to salvation requiring us to use our free choice. God is the cause and the initiator and one who completes our salvation, but we are required to spiritually respond to the free gift of grace. Ascetic activities are properly placed in this response. We need inner

A Spiritual Father

It is important to commit yourself to a spiritual father for guidance. It's difficult to travel a road where you have not been before without some kind of guide. It can even be dangerous.

How do you find a spiritual father? When you seek you will be shown a guide. You can pray for the Lord to show you a guide. Once you find one entrust yourself to this guide. He will lead you along a path to salvation.

discipline, or purity of heart, to make the right choices. This has nothing to do with the "works of the law" in the Judaic sense.

Paul says when talking about his and other Apostles' calling, *"we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name."*[5] The idea of "obedience of faith" is one that implies one's full spiritual activity in the response to the grace of God. It involves an ongoing spiritual effort. It involves choice and action. Paul writes that God *"will render to each according to his works."*[6] Our works are important along with our faith.

Paul advises us to control our bodily desires. He tells us, *"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body in order to obey its lusts. Nor yield your members to sin as weapons of uprighteousness."*[7] He sees that we are engaged in a spiritual struggle. He is saying that we need to be able to control our bodily lusts first so we can make the choices that will allow us to carry out the tenets of the Law.. Also the word weapon implies that we are involved in a type of spiritual warfare.

He also writes, *"you who were slaves of sin obeyed out of the heart..."*[8] Earlier he mentioned the universal aspect of the *"law that is written in the hearts"* of mankind.[9] Paul is talking about the deepest aspect of our interior life. He is implying an obedience that comes from the heart and action in line with Apostolic teachings. This is not the same as following some kind of rule book, but a way of being where we are pure in our intentions. This purity is what needs to be developed to perfect our being so we can come closer to God.

He writes for example, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."*[10] We are in his words providing a "service" which is an action and offering our bodies as a "living sacrifice." Paul also commands, "*do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*"[11] Paul here is assuming a synergistic action of two wills, one the will of God, which proceeds and completes, and one that is the will of man that responds and cooperates. He is constantly reminding us that our aim is life in the Kingdom of heaven which is not of this world, but one we must prepare ourselves for.

In his letters to the Corinthians He compares the spiritual life with that of running a race and warfare. He writes, *"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.."*[12] Here he places an emphasis on self-control. He uses the analogies of preparation for athletic competitions, where one must practice and exercise to run a good race. He is showing us that in the spiritual life it is just as in athletics. We have to

A Ten Point Program

1. Daily Prayer
A regular prayer rule that includes morning and evening prayer.

2. Regular Worship and Participation in Sacraments
Regular attendance and participation at the Divine LIturgy and regular participation in Confession.

3. Honoring the Liturgical Cycle of the Church
Follow the seasons of the church and participate in the fasts and feasts of the Church.

4. Jesus Prayer
Repetition in the heart of the Holy name whenever possible throughout the day or night.

5. Slowing Down and Ordering Our Life
Setting priorities and reducing the stress and friction caused by a hurried life.

6. Watchfulness
Giving full attention to what we are doing at the moment.

7. Taming the Passions
Overcoming our habits and learning to practice the virtues.

8. Putting Others First
Freeing ourselves from our selfishness and finding joy in helping others.

9. Spiritual Companionship
Spending time regularly with other Orthodox Christians for support and inspiration.

10. Reading the Scriptures and Holy Fathers
Being inspired by the lessons of the Holy Scriptures and the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and the lives of the Saints of the Church.

exercise, preparing just like a good athlete for the contest, if we desire to attain our spiritual goal to become like God. These exercises are our ascetic practices.

Throughout the New Testament, we see that there is implied a synergistic approach to our salvation and, therefore, the actions that we take to improve or purify our human condition are important for us to be able to follow the teachings of Christ. This is not something that only monastics are expected to do. It is something we all must engage in if we are serious about our salvation. The ascetic disciplines are the way we train ourselves to align our human will with the will of God so we can live in union with Him and through His grace be uplifted to paradise and eternal life.

The Orthodox way is clearly not a passive one that is based on faith alone. Both faith and works in the law as set out by Christ, not to be confused with the Laws of the Jews which Christ gave new meaning, are necessary. Orthodoxy is not a faith that distinguishes between two ways of life - monastic or married. Both are accepted as legitimate paths although one may be preferable to the other. The path we take is one to be freely chosen by each of us. We have to deal with the environment that our choice creates for us. We need to purify ourselves through self discipline so we can become more perfect and move toward our goal to become like God.

Where do I begin? Outwardly order your life

This all sounds so difficult and becoming perfect like God an impossible goal. By our own power this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Don't compromise on what is possible but think about how to take the first steps along a long path.

An easy first step is to outwardly order your life. You can begin by abandoning any activity you think might not be consistent with the commandments of God. Take a look at your relationships and acquaintances and identify those that detract from your salvation and systematically eliminate them. Retain and increase those which are beneficial for your salvation. Associate with those who share your Orthodox world view and way of life. Rearrange your duties so they are congruent with your faith. Establish your schedule so that you can participate in all the Church services. Organize your plans according to the liturgical cycle of the Church. Put order into your family affairs. Create a pleasant environment around you in your home and office with icons that remind you of your spiritual aim. Prepare and regularly participate in Confession and Holy Communion.

Make a list of what you can do. Identify those things which will have the greatest positive impact on your life. Identify those which are the easiest to accomplish. Choose a few changes to make and make them. Periodically review this list, make additions and then further changes. You want to make steady steps in ordering your life. Move forward carefully and seek guidance in your prayers and from your spiritual father..

The Sign of the Cross

Make the sign of the cross regularly to acknowledge the presence of our Lord.

This signifies Christ's suffering, Crucifixion and Resurrection for our salvation.

This reminds us that we are called to follow in the steps of Christ.

This helps us bear our sorrows and deprivations in His name

This keeps the image of the cross in front of us.

This helps gain strength against our battle with the devil.

This keeps in mind the glory of Christ in the Second Coming which is preceded by the sign of the Cross in the sky.

How Should I Pray?

"Prayer needs no teacher. It requires diligence, effort and personal ardor, and then God will be its teacher." St. Meletius the Confessor

Personal Prayer

Once you begin to outwardly order your life, prayer is the first discipline you should develop. What is prayer? It is the mutual and personal encounter with God. It is through prayer that we open ourselves to the invisible, imperceptible power of God. The perfect example of personal prayer is the one given to us by Jesus Himself: *Our Father who art in Heaven. Hallowed be thy name Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.* To pray is to stand before God with our mind in our heart.

Why do we Pray?

First of all, Christ asks us to pray. He tells us in the Gospel of Luke, *How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him* (Luke 11:13). We pray so that God can help us to become more like Him in our actions. We also pray for our renewal and the growth of our soul. We pray to give thanks to God for all he provides for us. We also pray to seek forgiveness for our sinfulness. We can also pray to seek help for others as well as ourselves. But we must not forget to pray for His help in our own spiritual growth. This is not selfish, but essential for us to better love and serve others and carry out God's commandments. We can ask also for His help in supporting us in the various ascetic practices we choose to undertake to help purify our inner being.

We are asked to pray without ceasing. Here are the Scripture references to this idea.

- *Pray without ceasing* (1Thess 5:17)
- *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit* (Eph 6:158)
- *He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart.* (Luke 18:1)

Our life is to become one of a constant prayer where we are continually in a relationship with God. This is our main task, to draw nearer to God. Saint Isaac of Syria says that it is impossible to draw near to God by any means other than unceasing prayer.

Trisagion Prayer

You can begin all your prayer times with this prayer.

Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, present in all places and filling all things, Treasury of Goodness and Giver of life: come and abide in us. Cleanse us from every stain of sin and save our souls, O Gracious Lord.

Holy God. Holy Mighty. Holy Immortal Have mercy on us.(3)

Glory to the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen

All Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, forgive our sins. Master, pardon our transgressions. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for the glory of Your name.

Lord, have mercy.(3)

Glory to the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Yours is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

How Do We Pray?

A Regular Time

First, you need to establish a regular time to pray. You should have as a minimum a time in the morning and a time in the evening. With our busy lives this means you will have to make some conscious changes to make time for prayer. Pick a time that you know you can keep no matter what. Strict discipline in this is important. The length of time is something that only you can determine in consultation with your spiritual father. You prayer time should not be less than ten minutes in the morning and then again in the evening. Your time in prayer will grow as your relationship with God grows. At first you will find it a struggle to maintain what seem like a simple discipline as there are negative forces that will try and keep you from regular prayer. But, there will come a time when you can't wait for the time to pray. Expect a struggle in the beginning to maintain a strict schedule. As the popular saying goes, "Just do it!" Think of all the other things in your life that you do routinely like getting to work of school on time, or personal hygiene acts like brushing your teeth. Surely you can also make prayer a fixed routine.

A Private Place

Next, you need to find a quiet private place where you will not be disturbed for your daily prayer. This may be a corner in the bedroom (a room divider can help make a special place), space in a walk-in closet, or, if you are fortunate to have an extra room, a special room that is only for prayer. It needs to be a place where you can be undisturbed and alone. Once you choose the place, you should set up a small home icon stand. On it place an icon of Christ, Theotokos, and your patron saint. Have an oil lamp or candle that you can light while you pray. Also an incense burner, a cross and a prayer book and Bible.

Praying

With a regular time and a special place, you are ready to begin. You begin praying by focusing your consciousness in your heart and forcibly gathering there all the powers of the soul and body. Take the time at the beginning of your prayer time to quiet your body and to concentrate your energies in your heart. Christ says, "Enter into thy closet and ... shut thy door" (Matt 6:6). Remove all activities that could disrupt your inner descent. Set aside, to the best of your ability, all of your problems of the day and your worries for tomorrow. This is not a time for thinking or worrying. When you are preparing to pray, stand, sit or walk a few minutes and steady your mind to concentrate on God. Reflect on who it is that you will be addressing. Remember, it is God

What is a Prayer Rope (Comboschini) ?

The prayer rope is not some kind of amulet with magic or exorcising powers. On the contrary, it is a purely Orthodox holy object used only for praying and nothing else.

There are two ways we can pray using the prayer rope:

1. At any time of the day when we have free time, without being seen by anyone, secretly, we hold the prayer rope with our left or right hand and move from knot to knot with our thumb whispering simultaneously or meditating upon the prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me" or "Most Holy Theotokos save us".

2. At the time of our regular prayer, when we pray following the rule of prayer that our spiritual father has told us to follow, we hold the prayer rope with our left hand between the thumb and the index finger and move from knot to knot. At each knot we simultaneously do two things: i) with our right hand we make the sign of the cross over ourselves and ii) we say the prayer "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me". When we finish with all the knots of the prayer rope, we continue following the same procedure, for as many times as our spiritual father has ad-

Himself who you are about to talk with. Try to bring about a feeling of humility and reverent awe. Make some prostrations before you begin.

You should have a specific rule for both morning and evening. Don't try and wing it. You are developing a discipline that is beyond what you will feel like doing. This is not a relaxation exercise but a path to be in communion with your God. You will need to have a specific set of guidelines that you follow each time with no excuses for shortcutting them. In your rule, incorporate standing, prostrations, kneeling, making the sign of the cross, reading, and at times singing. Use prayer books and written prayers. The Orthodox prayer books are filled with prayers that have been well tested and used for hundreds of years. Prayer does not have to be a creative activity. You must be sincere. Keep your awareness in your heart and concentrate on the words of the prayer. Once you establish a rule, always keep it. Be sure to work with your spiritual Father on this.

As you begin to pray enter into every word of the prayer. Bring the meaning of the words down into your heart. Do not rush through the prayers like you are in a hurry to get them over with. Let them slowly drop into the depths of your heart with humility and awe of God. Its like in driving a car. When you are going 90 miles per hour down the highway the driver may feel powerful and in control. But at high speeds things can go wrong fast. When driving at a speed of twenty-five miles per hour the car handles easy and if someone makes a dangerous maneuver you can easily avoid it. Well, the mind works the same way. We want to train it to slow down so we can open our heart to God's presence. So, in prayer we say the words slowly so we can gain the meaning of them and allow them to penetrate our consciousness and to bring to our heart feelings of love and reverence for our God. Let the words drop individually into your heart like pebbles dropping into a pond. You will eventually find the right pace for yourself. Beware of the tendency to rush to complete them hurriedly. When this happens you have turned your prayer into an obligation and it is no longer true prayer. Don't worry if you catch your self doing this. It is normal at first. Just stop and slow down and proceed asking God's forgiveness and help. Also, study the prayers before you use them so you know the meaning of each word. Eventually you will want to memorize them.

After you begin to recite your prayers you will find that your mind will want to wander. Don't be concerned about this as this is natural due to the forces that do not want us to pray to God. Work to learn to concentrate your attention. When you mind wanders, be gentle with yourself and go back and recite again what you said while your mind was elsewhere. Bring yourself to concentrate on the words of the prayer. Sometimes it helps to say them out loud for a while. The mind is quite adept at being able to have you do more than one thing at a time. You need to bring yourself to a single focus on God. These wanderings of the mind show you the dimensions of your busy life that you need to find ways to make quieter so you can be always mindful of God. Prayer it is not time to focus on these worldly activities, because this will only further distract you from prayer. Work to concentrate your

Suggestions for morning prayer

Lord, give me the strength to greet the coming day in peace. Help me in all things to rely on Your holy will. Reveal Your will to me every hour of the day. Bless my dealings with all people. Teach me to treat all people who come to me throughout the day with peace of soul and with firm conviction that Your will governs all. In all my deeds and words guide my thoughts and feelings. In unexpected events, let me not forget that all are sent by you. Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering and embarrassing others. Give me the physical strength to bear the labors of this day. Direct my will, teach me to pray, pray in me. Amen.

(Here you may add your own private prayers and intercessions, using your own words or some of the Prayers found on the Web Page. When you have finished, conclude with this prayer.)

Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

attention more and more. Each day you will gain in your attentiveness during prayer.

When you finish your prayers, stand for a few moments. Consider to what your prayer life commits you. Try to hold in your heart what has been given to you. Treasure it for a few moments.

Remember to make your prayer life one that is a firm rule and not something that is done occasionally or sporadically. It must be done each day morning and evening at a minimum. You need to have specific prayers that are part of your prayer rule. You need to commit to doing you rule each and every day. Think about certain personal hygiene tasks such as brushing your teeth that you do each day out of habit . You don't forget to do them each day. The same needs to be with your prayer rule. You need to make prayer a similar habit that you never forget. Just like the hygiene activities that we do for the health of our body, prayer is essential for the health of our soul.

What is the Jesus Prayer?

The Jesus prayer is known in the Orthodox Church as one of the most powerful prayers. It is a discipline that will pay numerous dividends in your Orthodox life over the years if you follow its simple practice. The prayer is very simple. "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have mercy on me a sinner." The practice of the Jesus Prayer is to say the prayer over and over until it becomes an unceasing prayer in your heart. Of course this takes many years. To begin to recite the Jesus prayer, add to your payer rule the recitation of a certain number of repetitions. You might begin with saying it fifty times. This is where the use of a prayer rope comes in. A prayer rope is made of of a fixed number of knots. A common one has fifty knots. As you say the Jesus prayer you advance your thumb and forefinger one knot each time. In this way you will know how many times you have repeated the prayer. Prayer ropes are made in monasteries and blessed with prayer in their making.

The name of our Lord Jesus Christ is a divine name. The power and effect of that name are divine, omnipotent and salvific, and transcend our ability to comprehend it. With faith therefore, with confidence and sincerity, and with great piety and fear ought we to proceed to the doing of the great work which God has entrusted to us: to train ourselves in prayer by using the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)

You begin the practice of the Jesus prayer as with other prayers by reciting them with you lips or saying them aloud. Then after you have learned to concentrate your mind on prayer, you can begin to say them in your mind. Finally after much time you will descend from the mind into your heart and your prayers will be said from the depths of your inner most being.

St. John of the Ladder counsels that the mind should be locked into the words of the prayer and should be forced back each time it departs from it (Step XXVIII, ch. 17). Such a mechanism of prayer is remarkably helpful and suitable. When the mind, in its own manner, acquires attentiveness, then the heart will join it with its own offering—compunction. The

Suggestions for evening prayer

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Now that the day has ended, I thank you Lord, and I ask that the evening and the night be sinless. Grant this to me, O Savior, and save me.

Glory to the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit

Now that the day has passed, I glorify you, O Master, and I ask that the evening and the night be without offense. Grant this to me, O Savior, and save me.

Both now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen

Now that the day has run its course, I praise you, O Holy One, and I ask that the evening and the night be undisturbed. Grant this to me, O Savior, and save me.

Prayers for Forgiveness

Lord, God our Father, if during this day I have sinned in word, deed or thought forgive me in Your goodness and love. Grant me peaceful sleep; protect me from all evil and awake me in the morning that I may glorify you, Your Son and Your Holy Spirit now and forever and ever. Amen.

As you lie down to sleep say:

Lord, into Your hands I commend my soul and body. Bless me, be merciful to me and grant me life eternal. Amen.

heart will empathize with the mind by means of compunction, and the prayer will be said by the mind and heart together. The words of the prayer ought to be said without the feast hurry. even lingering, so that the mind can lock itself into each word. St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)

Why do we Pray for the Dead?

In the Orthodox world view there is eternal life and we never leave the Church. In God all are alive. Our Church life is penetrated by the living awareness and feeling that our dead ones continue to live after death only in a different form. They are not deprived of spiritual nearness to those of us here on earth. Saint Paul tells us, *"Neither death nor life... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ our Lord"*. (Rom 8:38-3) All the ancient liturgies attest to this both in the East and the West.

When we pray for the dead the Church intercedes for them just as it does for the living. We pray for the forgiveness of sins for all who have died for no one is sinless (1John 1:8). Prayer helps nurture the seeds of a new life that those who have died have taken up. Now we are not to be deceived about reviving rotten seeds. Nothing can revive rotten seeds. The prayers for those who have died in impiety and without repentance are powerless. (1Thes 5:19) However, on earth we do not know what lot one has been subjected to. A prayer of love can never be without profit. We must remember that those in heaven respond to our prayers with prayers for us.

Why do we include Saints in our Prayers?

In our Prayer rule we can also ask the saints to interceed for us and to help us in our worldly struggles. Saints are those holy individuals who have died as martyrs, who have made a fearless confession of faith often with the threat of death, who have demonstrated self-sacrificing service, who have a special gift of healing and perform miracles after their death when remembered in prayer.

These holy people the Lord calls His friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. *No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.* (John 15:14-15)

They are those He has received in His heavenly mansions in fulfillment of His words: *Where I am, there you may be also.* (John 14:3) Instead of praying for forgiveness of their sins, we praise them for their struggles in Christ. We make petitions to them asking them to pray for us and the remission of our sins and spiritual growth, seeking their help in our spiritual needs.

The saints are near the Throne of God.

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, who praised the Lord. (Rev 5:11)

Our communion in prayer with the saints is the realization of the bond between Christians on earth and the Heavenly Church. (Heb 12:22-23)

Sacred scripture presents numerous examples that the righteous, while still living can see and hear and know much that is inaccessible to the ordinary understanding. The saints while they were still on earth we able to penetrate in spirit into the world above.

From the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (luke 16:10-31) we know that Abraham being in heaven could hear the cry of the rich man who was suffering in hell, despite the great unbridgeable gulf that separates them.

The Church has always taught the invocation of the saints, convinced they intercede for us before God in heaven. Having a prayer relationship with a saint is another way that we can gain help in our spiritual path to salvation in the Church.

A Sample Prayer Rule

A prayer rule is the outline of our daily prayer routine. It is important to have a thought out rule. Casually going to your place for prayer and simply talking with God is not the best way to begin to develop your prayer life. We will find that we end up babbling in front of our God. We can take advantage of the centuries of wisdom and being by using proven prayers that will lift us up in our way of communicating with God.

A prayer rule should first specify the place and time of prayer.

Then it should outline the sequence of your prayers and the specific prayers you will say. Below is an example of a beginners prayer rule

Morning and Evening Prayer

Place: In the icon stand in the spare bead room

Time: 6:30am and 11:00pm for 20 minutes each time

Begin by lighting a candle, and making three prostrations and then stand quietly to collect yourself in your heart

Trisagion Prayer

One of six Morning or Evening Psalms

Intercessions for the living and the dead

Psalm 51 and confession of our sinfulness

Doxology and the morning or evening prayer

Personal dialogue with God

Jesus prayer - repeat 100 times.

Reflect quietly on the tasks of the day and prepare yourself for the difficulties you might face asking God to help you .

Dismissal prayer

Remember to stop mid morning , noon and mid afternoon to say a simple prayer.

Repeat the Jesus Prayer in your mind whenever you can throughout the day.

Offer a prayer before and after each meal thanking God and asking for His blessing.

What is Corporate Prayer?

Corporate prayer is the official prayer of the Church when it is formally assembled. It is the way the Church participates in perpetual prayer in the presence of God in the Kingdom of heaven. There is no tradition of corporate prayer which is not liturgical in the Orthodox Church. To participate in corporate prayer one should also pray by himself, at home, and in his own mind and heart. Attending the Divine Liturgy once a week is essential, but not sufficient for a vibrant prayer life. We should attend the divine liturgy each Sunday as this is one of God's commandments. When we attend the services we must remember to participate and to pray the litanies intoned by the priest or deacon and other prayers offered on our behalf. Hopefully worship in the church will become another habit to your life. It can become a new source of joy in your life, no longer viewed as an obligation you struggle to fulfill.

St. John Chrysostom

Fasting is a medicine. But medicine, as beneficial as it is, becomes useless because of the inexperience of the user. He has to know the appropriate time that the medicine should be taken and the right amount of medicine and the condition of the body which is to take it, the weather conditions and the season of the year and the appropriate diet of the sick and many other things. If any of these things are overlooked, the medicine will do more harm than good. So, if one who is going to heal the body needs so much accuracy, when we care for the soul and are concerned about healing it from bad thoughts, it is necessary to examine and observe everything with every possible detail

Fasting is the change of every part of our life, because the sacrifice of the fast is not the abstinence but the distancing from sins. Therefore, whoever limits the fast to the deprivation of food, he is the one who, in reality, abhors and ridicules the fast. Are you fasting? Show me your fast with your works. Which works? If you see someone who is poor, show him mercy. If you see an enemy, reconcile with him. If you see a friend who is becoming successful, do not be jealous of him! If you see a beautiful woman on the street, pass her by.

How do I fast?

Fasting is the second ascetic practice you should begin as part of the Orthodox Way of Life. Of course if you do not have sufficient faith to participate in the regular worship services or to participate in the sacraments or time for daily prayer, fasting will not be of much help to you. Fasting is a practice that was also shown to us by Jesus as well as the prophets of the Old Testament. Jesus fasted for 40 days and we are told *"he ate nothing."* The Prophet David fasted *"I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine, no did I anoint myself."* (Daniel 10:3) Ester instructed Mordicai, *" Go, gather all the jews... and hold a fast on my behalf and neither eat nor drink for three days, night and day. I and my maids will also fast as you do."* (Ester 4:16) Paul engaged in a three day absolute fast following the encounter with the living Christ (Acts 9:9). Moses and Elijah fasted for forty days. (Deut 9:9, 1Kings 19:8)

Jesus also asked us to fast. He said that we can overcome the devil only through *"prayer and fasting"*. (Matt 17:21) In Matt 6:16 Jesus says *"When you fast...."* He assumes that you will fast and gives instruction on how to do it properly.

The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them , and then they will fast. (Matt 9:15)

Fasting is an important discipline. To be effective it must center on God. As we fast we discover the things that control us. David writes, *"I humbled my soul with fasting* (Ps 69:10)." Fasting reminds us that it is not food that sustains us, but God. It also helps us develop the discipline that is necessary for our spiritual growth.

The Church in her wisdom has provided for us fasting periods. These are times through out the year where we can focus on our spiritual life and double our efforts in prayer and worship.

On the outward level fasting involves physical abstinence from food and drink, and without such exterior abstinence a full and true fast cannot be kept; yet the rules about eating and drinking must never be treated as an end in themselves, for ascetic fasting always has an inward and unseen purpose. Man is a unity of body and soul, 'a living creature fashioned from natures visible and invisible' , in the words of the Triodion; and our ascetic fasting should therefore involve both these natures at once. The tendency to over-emphasize external rules about food in a legalistic way, and the opposite tendency to scorn these rules as outdated and unnecessary, should be deplored as a betrayal of true Orthodoxy. In both cases the proper balance between the outward and the inward has been impaired.[13]

The primary aim of fasting is to make us conscious of our dependence upon God. If practiced seriously, the Lenten abstinence from food - particularly in the opening days - involves a considerable measure of

John Chrysostom
What if you are ill?

If you cannot go without eating all day because of an ailment of the body, beloved one, no logical man will be able to criticize you for that. Besides, we have a Lord who is meek and loving (philanthropic) and who does not ask for anything beyond our power. Because he neither requires the abstinence from foods, neither that the fast take place for the simple sake of fasting, neither is its aim that we remain with empty stomachs, but that we fast to offer our entire selves to the dedication of spiritual things, having distanced ourselves from secular things. If we regulated our life with a sober mind and directed all of our interest toward spiritual things, and if we ate as much as we needed to satisfy our necessary needs and offered our entire lives to good works, we would not have any need of the help rendered by the fast. But because human nature is indifferent and gives itself over mostly to comforts and gratifications, for this reason the philanthropic Lord, like a loving and caring father, devised the therapy of the fast for us, so that our gratifications would be completely stopped and that our worldly cares be transferred to spiritual works. So, if there are some who have gathered here and who are hindered by somatic ailments and cannot remain without food, I advise them to nullify the somatic ailment and not to deprive themselves from this spiritual teaching, but to care for it even more.

real hunger, and also a feeling of tiredness and physical exhaustion. The purpose of this is to lead us in turn to a sense of inward brokenness and contrition; to bring us,to the point where we appreciate the full force of Christ's statement, *"Without Me you can do nothing"*. If we always take our fill of food and drink, we easily grow over-confident in our own abilities, acquiring a false sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency. We think we can provide for ourselves all we need for life. The observance of a physical fast undermines this sinful complacency. It strips us from us the superficially pleasing assurance of the Pharisee - who fasted, it is true, but prayed proudly, *"God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector."* - Lenten abstinence gives us the saving self dissatisfaction of the Publican who *"beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a siner!"* (Luke 18: 10-1 3). Such is the function of the hunger and the tiredness: to make us 'poor in spirit' like the Publican, aware of our helplessness and of our dependence on God's aid.[14]

Fasting is not a mere matter of diet. It is moral as well as physical. In the words of St. John Chrysostom, it means *"abstinence not only from food but from sins"*. *"The fast"*, he insists, *"should be kept not by the mouth alone but also by the eye, the ear, the feet, the hands and all the members of the body":* the eye must abstain from impure sights, the ear from malicious gossip, the hands from acts of injustice. It is useless to fast from food, protests St. Basil, and yet to indulge in cruel criticism and slander: *"You do not eat meat, but you devour your brother"*.

The same point is made in the Triodion, especially during the first week of Lent:

> As we fast from food, let us abstain also from every passion.
> Let us observe a fast acceptable and pleasing to the Lord.
> True fasting is to put away all evil,
> To control the tongue, to forbear from anger,
> To abstain from lust, slander, falsehood and perjury.
> If we renounce these things, then is our fasting true and acceptable to God.
> Let us keep the Fast not only by refraining from food,
> But by becoming strangers to all the bodily passions.

The inner significance of fasting is best summed up in the triad: prayer, fasting, almsgiving. Divorced from prayer and from the reception of the holy sacraments, unaccompanied by acts of compassion, our fasting becomes like that of the Pharasees or even demonic. It leads, not to contrition and joyfulness, but to pride, inward tension and irritability. The link between prayer and fasting is rightly indicated by Father Alexander Elchaninov. A critic of fasting says to him: "Our work suffers and we become irritable. . . . I have never seen servants [in pre-revolutionary Russia] so bad tempered as during the last days of Holy Week. Clearly, fasting has a very bad effect on the nerves." To this Father Alexander replies: "You are quite right. . . . If it is not accompanied by prayer and an increased spiritual life, it merely leads to a heightened state of irritability. It is natural that servants who took their fasting se-

Fasting Periods

1. **Great Lent**, which lasts for fifty days. Adherence to monastic traditions also calls for a partial fast during the week preceding the beginning of Lent.

2. **Holy Week**. A lesser fast is observed on the Saturday of Lazarus and Palm Sunday. A strict fast is observed from Holy Monday through the Paschal Vigil.

3. **Fast of the Apostles** begins on the Monday after the Sunday of All Saints and ends on June 28, the eve of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul the Apostles. The duration of this fast depends on the date of Pascha; however, in modern usage this fast is not observed with strictness.

4. **Fast of the Dormition** of the Theotokos (August 1-14).

5. **Fast of the Nativity** of Christ (November 15-December 24). In modern usage a strict observance of this fast commences after December 12. (The celebration of the Marriage Service which is generally prohibited during fasting periods is permitted between November 15 and December 12).

riously and who were forced to work hard during Lent, while not being allowed to go to church, were angry and irritable."[15]

Abstinence does not imply a rejection of God's creation. As St. Paul insists, "*Nothing is unclean in itself*" (Rom. 14: 14). All that God has made is "*very good*" (Gen. 1: 31): to fast is not to deny this intrinsic goodness but to reaffirm it. *"To the pure all things are pure"* (Titus 1:15), and so at the Messianic banquet in the Kingdom of heaven there will be no need for fasting and ascetic self-denial. But, living as we do in a fallen world, and suffering as we do from the consequences of sin, both original and personal, we are not pure; and so we have need of fasting. Evil resides not in created things as such, but in our attitude towards them, that is, in our will. The purpose of fasting, then, is not to repudiate the divine creation but to cleanse our will. During the fast we deny our bodily impulses - for example, our spontaneous appetite for food and drink - not because these impulses are in themselves evil, but because they have been disordered by sin, keep us focused on ourselves, and require to be purified through self-discipline. In this way, asceticism is a fight not against, but for the body; the aim of fasting is to purge the body from alien defilement and to render it spiritual - to free it from egoistic tendencies. By rejecting what is sinful in our will, we do not destroy the God-created body, but restore it to its true balance and freedom where the soul regains its noraml control. . In Father Sergei Bulgakov's phrase, we kill the flesh in order to acquire a body.

But making the body spiritual, we do not thereby dematerialize it, depriving it of its character as a physical entity. The 'spiritual' is not to be equated with the non-material, neither is the 'fleshly' or carnal to be equated with the bodily. In St. Paul's usage, *'flesh'* denotes the totality of man, soul and body together, in so far as he is fallen and separated from God; and in the same way 'spirit' denotes the totality of man, soul and body together, in so far as he is redeemed and divinized by grace. Thus the soul as well as the body can become carnal and fleshly, and the body as well as the soul can become spiritual. When St. Paul enumerates the 'works of the flesh' (Gal. 5: 19-21), he includes such things as sedition, heresy and envy, which involve the soul much more than the body. In making our body spiritual, then, the Lenten fast does not suppress the physical aspect of our human nature, but makes our materiality once more as God intended it to be.[16]

There is the weekly fast of every Wednesday and Friday. There is the Day before Christmas and Theophany. We fast on the feast days of the Exaltation of the Cross (Sep 14) and the Beheading of John the Baptist (Aug 29). Then there are five fasting periods. These are Great Lent, Holy Week, Fast of the Apostles, Fast of the Dormition of the Theotokos (August 1-14), Fast of Nativity of Christ (November 15-December 24). In modern usage a strict observance of this fast commences after December 12. (The celebration of the Marriage Service which is generally prohibited during fasting periods is permitted between November 15 and December 12).

There are also fast free periods. These are periods of great celebration. They are as follows:

Levels of Fasting

The most strict way of fasting to to abstain from all food. The next level is to abstain from all animal products such as meat and dairy products along with oil and wine. Then the next level is to allow wine and oil. Then to allow fish. The most common fast today is to abstain from the eating of meat. But this is not what the tradition of the church suggests we do. But it may be a starting point as we are so attached to eating of meat in our current culture compared to the earlier periods of Church history when eating meat was considered a luxury. So for us today this may be a difficult first step to take but don't end here.

Begin your practice of fasting by starting the practice of the weekly fast on Wednesday and Friday. This will make you think during the week about you purpose to come closer to God. It will reinforce you prayer life. It will also prepare you for participating in the sacrament of Holy Communion each Sunday which will further support your spiritual growth.

The Church publishes a calendar which has the traditional guidelines for each day on fasting. Once you have succeeded in abstaining from meat on these days then you can look at this calendar and make your fast more strict.

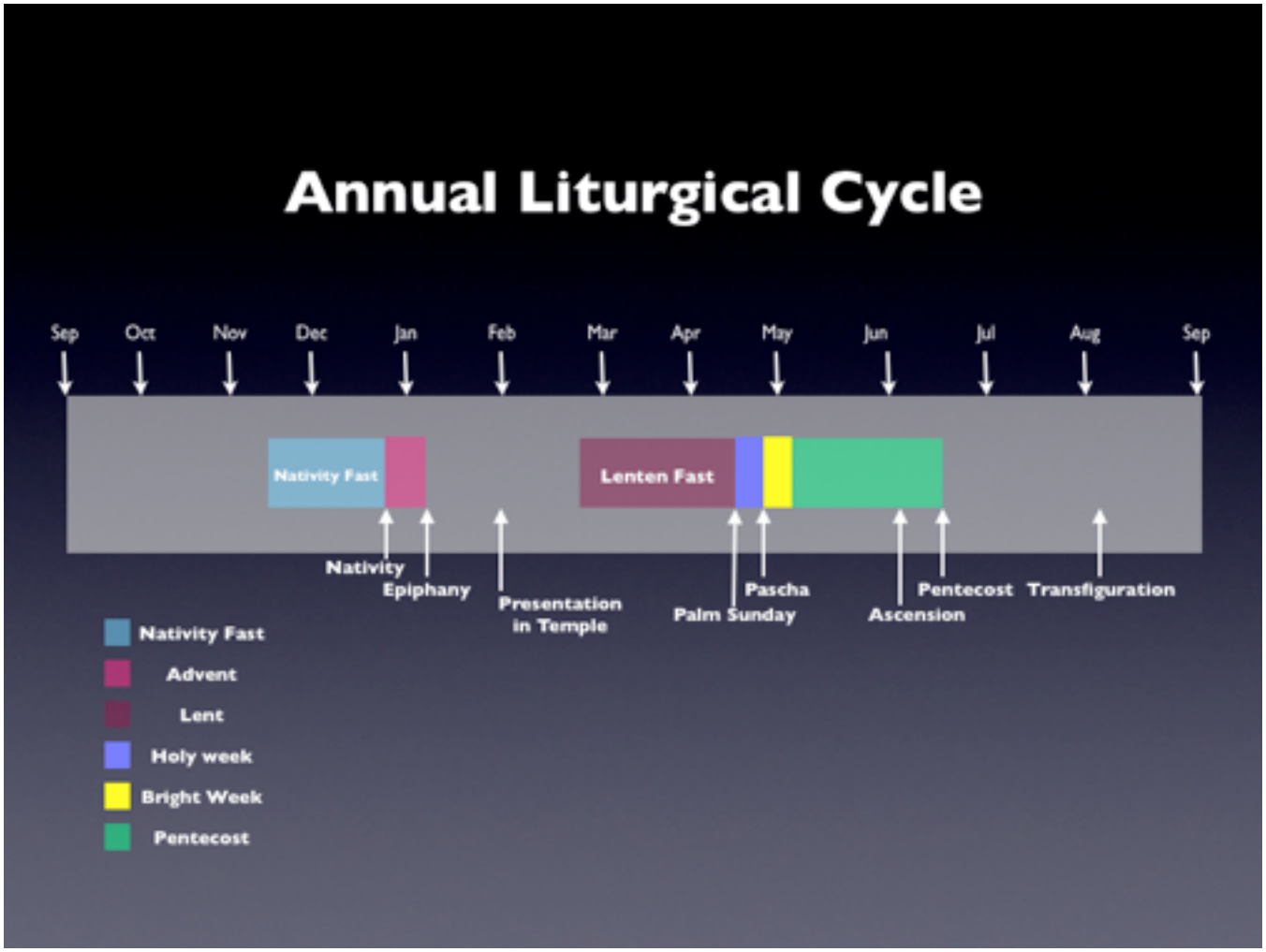
Nativity to the Eve of Theophany.
Week following the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee.
Bright Week — the week after Pascha.
Trinity Week — the week after Pentecost, ending with All Saints Sunday.

There are also different degrees of fasting that have been passed down to us . Remember these are not laws or rules that we are to blindly follow but re proven practices that can help us come closer to God. Orthodoxy is not legalistic or rule oriented. The rules guidelines that have been established for us are there for our spiritual benefit. We have to use them with the appropriate attitude to receive the benefit. In this matter be sure to follow the guidance of your spiritual father. We must beware of putting to much attention on the physical aspects before we have matured in our inner work as this can lead us to thinking that we do all the work and forget that is the grace of God that we are trying to come in union with and to follow. We can instead become proud of our physical achievements and lose our contact with God because of our sinfulness. Fasting is not a contest but it is an important self-discipline that will help us come closer to God when practiced with the proper attitude.

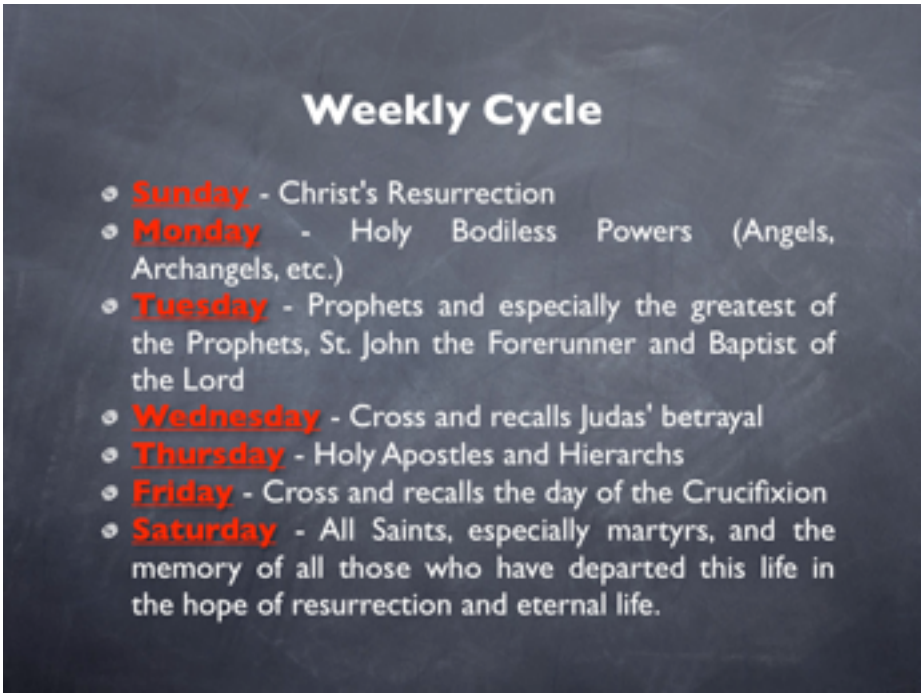
What is the Importance of the Liturgical Cycle of the Church?

The church provides a cycle of that supports our spiritual development. It is centered around the feast days of Christ and Mother Mary. In eeach period there are new hymns and prayers to help us remember the event being celebrated as well as periods of fasting and feasting. Below are shown the major Feast days of the Church.

In the next chart you can see the entire annual cycle. It begins with the nativity of our Lord which is preceded with a fast period. Then followed by a period of feasting and ends with Epiphany where Christ was Baptized by Saint john the Baptist and began His ministry. Then, we have the period of Great Lent that precedes Holy Week and Pascha. This is a time the Church Fathers have set aside for us to withdraw from many of the worldly cares to devote more time to our prayer and liturgical life. It is a period of strict fasting. Holy Week is the most intense period of the Church year with many services and strict fasting. Then comes the feast of feasts, Pascha. This is a great feast of the Resurrection and is followed by a period feasting. This period of celebration is capped by the celebration of Pentecost when the Apostles were empowered and sent to *"all nations"* to spread the Good News.



Shown below is the weekly cycle with fasting on Wednesday and Friday.



Beyond this is a daily cycle of prayer.

Living the Orthodox life involves honoring God's time. In this day and age we are all into time management. That is management of your own time. But we need to broaden our thinking and to think about God's time. We need to make plans for daily prayer, for the Wednesday and Friday fasts, for the keeping of the Sabbath and the demands of the Liturgical cycle of the Church. Our time management needs to be modified to accommodate God's time. **Orthodoxy is a way of life.**

How do I study the Bible?

By Bishop Kallistos Ware: How to Read the Bible

WE BELIEVE THAT THE SCRIPTURES constitute a coherent whole. They are at once divinely inspired and humanly expressed. They bear authoritative witness to God's revelation of Himself - in creation, in the Incarnation of the Word, and the whole history of salvation. And as such they express the word of God in human language. We know, receive, and interpret Scripture through the Church and in the Church. Our approach to the Bible is one of obedience.

We may distinguish four key qualities that mark an Orthodox reading of Scripture, namely:

1. It should be obedient,
2. It should be ecclesial, within the Church,
3. It should be Christ-centered,
4. It should be personal.

Reading the Bible with Obedience

FIRST OF ALL, when reading Scripture, we are to listen in a spirit of obedience. The Orthodox Church believes in divine inspiration of the Bible. Scripture is a "letter" from God, where Christ Himself is speaking. The Scriptures are God's authoritative witness of Himself. They express the Word of God in our human language. Since God Himself is speaking to us in the Bible, our response is rightly one of obedience, of receptivity, and listening. As we read, we wait on the Spirit.

But, while divinely inspired, the Bible is also humanly expressed. It is a whole library of different books written at varying times by distinct persons. Each book of the Bible reflects the outlook of the age in which it was written and the particular viewpoint of the author. For God does nothing in isolation, divine grace cooperates with human freedom. God does not abolish our individuality but enhances it. And so it is in the writing of inspired Scripture. The authors were not just a passive instrument, a dictation machine recording a message. Each writer of Scripture contributes his particular personal gifts. Alongside the divine aspect, there is also a human element in Scripture. We are to value both.

Each of the four Gospels, for example, has its own particular approach. Matthew presents more particularly a Jewish understanding of Christ, with an emphasis on the kingdom of heaven. Mark contains specific, picturesque details of Christ's ministry not given elsewhere. Luke expresses the universality of Christ's love, His all-embracing compassion that extends equally to Jew and to Gentile. In John there is a more inward and more mystical approach to Christ, with an emphasis on divine light and divine indwelling. We are to enjoy and explore to the full this life-giving variety within the Bible.

Because Scripture is in this way the word of God expressed in human language, there is room for honest and exacting inquiry when studying the Bible. Exploring the human aspect of the Bible, we are to use to the full our God-given human reason. The Orthodox Church does not exclude scholarly research into the origin, dates, and authorship of books of the Bible.

Alongside this human element, however, we see always the divine element. These are not simply books written by individual human writers. We hear in Scripture not just human words, marked by a greater or lesser skill and perceptiveness, but the eternal, uncreated Word of God Himself, the divine Word of salvation. When we come to the Bible, then, we come not simply out of curiosity, to gain information. We come to the Bible with a specific question, a personal question about ourselves: "How can I be saved?"

As God's divine word of salvation in human language, Scripture should evoke in us a sense of wonder. Do you ever feel, as you read or listen, that it has all become too familiar? Has the Bible grown rather boring? Continually we need to cleanse the doors of our perception and to look in amazement with new eyes at what the Lord sets before us.

We are to feel toward the Bible with a sense of wonder, and sense of expectation and surprise. There are so many rooms in Scripture that we have yet to enter. There is so much depth and majesty for us to discover. If obedience means wonder, it also means listening.

We are better at talking than listening. We hear the sound of

our own voice, but often we don't pause to hear the voice of the other person who is speaking to us. So the first requirement, as we read Scripture, is to stop talking and to listen - to listen with obedience.

When we enter an Orthodox Church, decorated in the traditional manner, and look up toward the sanctuary at the east end, we see there, in the apse, an icon of the Virgin Mary with her hands raised to heaven - the ancient Scriptural manner of praying that many still use today. This icon symbolizes the attitude we are to assume as we read Scripture - an attitude of receptivity, of hands invisibly raised to heaven. Reading the Bible, we are to model ourselves on the Blessed Virgin Mary, for she is supremely the one who listens. At the Annunciation she listens with obedience and responds to the angel, "Be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). She could not have borne the Word of God in her body if she had not first, listened to the Word of God in her heart. After the shepherds have adored the newborn Christ, it is said of her: "Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Again, when Mary finds Jesus in the temple, we are told: "His mother kept all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:51). The same need for listening is emphasized in the last words attributed to the Mother of God in Scripture, at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5), she says to the servants - and to all of us.

In all this the Blessed Virgin Mary serves as a mirror, as a living icon of the Biblical Christian. We are to be like her as we hear the Word of God: pondering, keeping all these things in our hearts, doing whatever He tells us. We are to listen in obedience as God speaks.

Understanding the Bible Through the Church

IN THE SECOND PLACE, we should receive and interpret Scripture through the Church and in the Church. Our approach to the Bible is not only obedient but ecclesial.

It is the Church that tells us what is Scripture. A book is not part of Scripture because of any particular theory about its dating and authorship. Even if it could be proved, for example, that the Fourth Gospel was not actually written by John the beloved disciple of Christ, this would not alter the fact that we Orthodox accept the Fourth Gospel as Holy Scripture. Why? Because the Gospel of John is accepted by the Church and in the Church.

It is the Church that tells us what is Scripture, and it is also the Church that tells us how Scripture is to be understood. Coming upon the Ethiopian as he read the Old Testament in his chariot, Philip the Apostle asked him, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" And the Ethiopian answered, "How can I, unless some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:30-31). We are all in the position of the Ethiopian. The words of Scripture are not always self-explanatory. God speaks directly to the heart of each one of us as we read our Bible. Scripture reading is a personal dialogue between each one of us and Christ - but we also need guidance. And our guide is the Church. We make full use of our own personal understanding, assisted by the Spirit, we make full use of the findings of modern Biblical research, but always we submit private opinion - whether our own or that of the scholars - to the total experience of the Church throughout the ages.

The Orthodox standpoint here is summed up in the question asked of a convert at the reception service used by the Russian Church: "Do you acknowledge that the Holy Scripture must be accepted and interpreted in accordance with the belief which has been handed down by the Holy Fathers, and which the Holy Orthodox Church, our Mother, has always held and still does hold?"

We read the Bible personally, but not as isolated individuals. We read as the members of a family, the family of the Orthodox Catholic Church. When reading Scripture, we say not " I" but "We." We read in communion with all the other members of the Body of Christ, in all parts of the world and in all generations of time. The decisive test and criterion for our understanding of what the Scripture means is the mind of the Church. The Bible is the book of the Church.

To discover this "mind of the Church," where do we begin? Our first step is to see how Scripture is used in worship. How, in particular, are Biblical lessons chosen for reading at the different feasts? We should also consult the writings of the Church Fathers, and consider how they interpret the Bible.

Our Orthodox manner of reading Scripture is in this way both liturgical and patristic. And this, as we all realize, is far from easy to do in practice, because we have at our disposal so few Orthodox commentaries on Scripture available in English, and most of the Western commentaries do not employ this liturgical and Patristic approach.

As an example of what it means to interpret Scripture in a liturgical way, guided by the use made of it at Church feasts, let us look at the Old Testament lessons appointed for Vespers on the Feast of the Annunciation. They are three in number: Genesis 28:10-17; Jacob's dream of a ladder set up from earth to heaven; Ezekiel 43:27-44:4; the prophet's vision of the Jerusalem sanctuary, with the closed gate through which none but the Prince may pass; Proverbs 9:1-11: one of the great Sophianic passages in the Old Testament, beginning "Wisdom has built her house." These texts in the Old Testament, then, as their selection for the feast of the Virgin Mary indicates, are all to be understood as prophecies concerning the Incarnation from the Virgin. Mary is Jacob's ladder, supplying the flesh that God incarnate takes upon entering our human world. Mary is the closed gate who alone among women bore a child while still remaining inviolate. Mary provides the house which Christ the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24) takes as his dwelling. Exploring in this manner the choice of lessons for the various feasts, we discover layers of Biblical interpretation that are by no means obvious on a first reading.

Take as another example Vespers on Holy Saturday, the first part of the ancient Paschal Vigil. Here we have no less than fifteen Old Testament lessons. This sequence of lessons sets before us the whole scheme of sacred history, while at the same time underlining the deeper meaning of Christ's Resurrection. First among the lessons is Genesis 1:1-13, the account of Creation: Christ's Resurrection is a new Creation. The fourth lesson is the book of Jonah in its entirety, with the prophet's three days in the belly of the whale foreshadowing Christ's Resurrection after three days in the tomb (cf. Matthew 12:40). The sixth lesson recounts the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites (Exodus 13:20-15:19), which anticipates the new Passover of Pascha whereby Christ passes over from death to life (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7; 10:1-4). The final lesson is the story of the three Holy Children in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3), once more a "type" or prophecy of Christ's rising from the tomb. Such is the effect of reading Scripture ecclesially, in the Church and with the Church. Studying the Old Testament in this liturgical way and using the Fathers to help us, everywhere we uncover signposts pointing forward to the mystery of Christ and of His Mother. Reading the Old Testament in the light of the New, and the New in the light of the, Old - as the Church's calendar encourages us to do - we discover the unity of Holy Scripture. One of the best ways of identifying correspondences between the Old and New Testaments is to use a good Biblical concordance. This can often tell us more about the meaning of Scripture than any commentary.

In Bible study groups within our parishes, it is helpful to give one person the special task of noting whenever a particular passage in the Old or New Testament is used for a festival or a saint's day. We can then discuss together the reasons why each specific passage has been so chosen. Others in the group can be assigned to do homework among the Fathers, using for example the Biblical homilies of Saint John Chrysostom (which have been translated into English). Christians need to acquire a patristic mind.

Christ, the Heart of the Bible

THE THIRD ELEMENT in our reading of Scripture is that it should be Christ-centered. The Scriptures constitute a coherent whole because they all are Christ-centered. Salvation through the Messiah is their central and unifying topic. He is as a "thread" that runs through all of Holy Scripture, from the first sentence to the last. We have already mentioned the way in which Christ may be seen foreshadowed on the pages of the Old Testament.

Much modern critical study of Scripture in the West has adopted an analytical approach, breaking up each book into different sources. The connecting links are unraveled, and the Bible is reduced to a series of bare primary units. There is certainly value in this. But we need to see the unity as well as the diversity of Scripture, the all-embracing end as well as the scattered beginnings. Orthodoxy prefers on the whole a synthetic rather than an analytical approach, seeing Scripture as an integrated whole, with Christ everywhere as the

bond of union.

Always we seek for the point of convergence between the Old Testament and the New, and this we find in Jesus Christ. Orthodoxy assigns particular significance to the "typological" method of interpretation, whereby "types" of Christ, signs and symbols of His work, are discerned throughout the Old Testament. A notable example of this is Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem, who offered bread and wine to Abraham (Genesis 14:18), and who is seen as a type of Christ not only by the Fathers but even in the New Testament itself (Hebrews 5:6; 7:l). Another instance is the way in which, as we have seen, the Old Passover foreshadows the New; Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh at the Red Sea anticipates our deliverance from sin through the death and Resurrection of the Savior. This is the method of interpretation that we are to apply throughout the Bible. Why, for instance, in the second half of Lent are the Old Testament readings from Genesis dominated by the figure of Joseph? Why in Holy Week do we read from the book of Job? Because Joseph and Job are innocent sufferers, and as such they are types or foreshadowings of Jesus Christ, whose innocent suffering upon the Cross the Church is at the point of celebrating. It all ties up.

A Biblical Christian is the one who, wherever he looks, on every page of Scripture, finds everywhere Christ.

The Bible as Personal

IN THE WORDS of an early ascetic writer in the Christian East, Saint Mark the Monk: "He who is humble in his thoughts and engaged in spiritual work, when he reads the Holy Scriptures, will apply everything to himself and not to his neighbor." As Orthodox Christians we are to look everywhere in Scripture for a personal application. We are to ask not just "What does it mean?" but "What does it mean to me?" Scripture is a personal dialogue between the Savior and myself - Christ speaking to me, and me answering. That is the fourth criterion in our Bible reading.

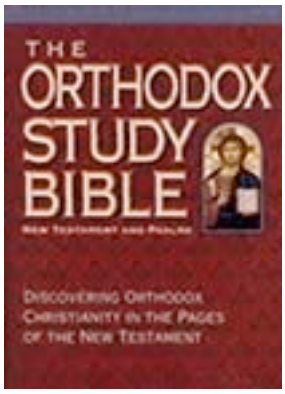
I am to see all the stories in Scripture as part of my own personal story. Who is Adam? The name Adam means "man," "human," and so the Genesis account of Adam's fall is also a story about me. I am Adam. It is to me that God speaks when He says to Adam, "Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9). "Where is God?" we often ask. But the real question is what God asks the Adam in each of us: "Where art thou?" When, in the story of Cain and Abel, we read God's words to Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?" (Genesis 4:9), these words, too, are addressed to each of us. Who is Cain? It is myself. And God asks the Cain in each of us, "Where is thy brother?" The way to God lies through love of other people, and there is no other way. Disowning my brother, I replace the image of God with the mark of Cain, and deny my own vital humanity.

In reading Scripture, we may take three steps. First, what we have in Scripture is sacred history: the history of the world from the Creation, the history of the chosen people, the history of God Incarnate in Palestine, and the "mighty works" after Pentecost. The Christianity that we find in the Bible is not an ideology, not a philosophical theory, but a historical faith.

Then we are to take a second step. The history presented in the Bible is a personal history. We see God intervening at specific times and in specific places, as He enters into dialogue with individual persons. He addresses each one by name. We see set before us the specific calls issued by God to Abraham, Moses and David, to Rebekah and Ruth, to Isaiah and the prophets, and then to Mary and the Apostles. We see the selectivity of the divine action in history, not as a scandal but as a blessing. God's love is universal in scope, but He chooses to become Incarnate in a particular comer of the earth, at a particular time and from a particular Mother. We are in this manner to savor all the uniqueness of God's action as recorded in Scripture. The person who loves the Bible loves details of dating and geography. Orthodoxy has an intense devotion to the Holy Land, to the exact places where Christ lived and taught, died and rose again. An excellent way to enter more deeply into our Scripture reading is to undertake a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Galilee. Walk where Christ walked. Go down to the Dead Sea, sit alone on the rocks, feel how Christ felt during the forty days of His temptation in the wilderness. Drink from the well where He spoke with the Samaritan woman. Go at night to the Garden of Gethsemane, sit in the dark under the ancient olives and look across the valley to the lights of the city. Experience to the full the reality of the historical setting, and take

that experience back with you to your daily Scripture reading.

Then we are to take a third step. Reliving Biblical history in all its particularity, we are to apply it directly to ourselves. We are to say to ourselves, "All these places and events are not just far away and long ago, but are also part of my own personal encounter with Christ. The stories include me." Betrayal, for example, is part of the personal story of everyone. Have we not all betrayed others at some time in our life, and have we not all known what it is to be betrayed, and does not the memory of these moments leave continuing scars on our psyche? Reading, then, the account of Saint Peter's betrayal of Christ and of his restoration after the Resurrection, we can see ourselves as actors in the story. Imagining what both Peter and Jesus must have experienced at the moment immediately after the betrayal, we enter into their feelings and make them our own. I am Peter; in this situation can I also be Christ? Reflecting likewise on the process of reconciliation - seeing how the Risen Christ with a love utterly devoid of sentimentality restored the fallen Peter to fellowship, seeing how Peter on his side had the courage to accept this restoration - we ask ourselves: How Christ-like am I to those who have betrayed me? And, after my own acts of betrayal, am I able to accept the forgiveness of others - am I able to forgive myself? Or am I timid, mean, holding myself back, never ready to give myself fully to anything, either good or bad? As the Desert Fathers say, "Better someone who has sinned, if he knows he has sinned and repents, than a person who has not sinned and thinks of himself as righteous."



It is highly recommended that you obtain a copy of the Orthodox Study Bible. This edition contains interpretations from an Orthodox perspective. It contains the New Testament and the Psalms with abundant commentary and other study aids.

[1] By Fr T. Avramis (with the approval of Bishop Anthony of San Francisco)
from **The Truth**, March 2004, v. 18/3, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

[2] Matt 5:48

[3] Matt 6:1

[4] Matt 17:21 & Mark 9:29

[5] Rom 1:4-5

[6] Rom 2:6

[7] Rom 6:12f

[8] Rom 6:17

[9] Rom 2:15

[10] Rom !2:1

[11] Rom 12:2

[12] I Cor 9:24-27

[13] MOTHER MARY AND BISHOP KALLISTOS WARE
Taken from The Lenten Triodion (pp.13-37)

[14] MOTHER MARY AND BISHOP KALLISTOS WARE
Taken from The Lenten Triodion (pp.13-37)

[15] MOTHER MARY AND BISHOP KALLISTOS WARE
Taken from The Lenten Triodion (pp.13-37)

[16] MOTHER MARY AND BISHOP KALLISTOS WARE
Taken from The Lenten Triodion (pp.13-37)